

The
SHORT STORY
Reader

Edited by

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Oak Park, Illinois

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TO THE TEACHERS WHO WILL USE THIS BOOK

The Short Story Reader, like its companion volumes *Stories in Verse* and *Plays as Experience*, is based on the belief that the teaching of any type of literature involves two steps: (1) analysis, to discover and recognize in the type the elements that contribute to entertainment and edification; (2) experience in reading good examples of the type, to develop the kind of competent reading that secures to the reader the greatest degree of both pleasure and profit. By this two-fold approach, the pupil acquires a cultivated literary appreciation; that is, he learns to distinguish the good from the bad, and to prefer the good.

Accordingly, this book is divided into two major parts: Part One, which contains instruction in the elements and techniques of the short story as a literary type, and points out the values that raise stories above the level of the mediocre; and Part Two, which is a little anthology of good short stories, providing opportunity for the pupil to apply what he has learned in Part One and to advance his appreciation. It may be noted that Part One is further divided into two sections, organized to point out the elements of the short-story art that offer pleasure only (Reading for Fun Only) and those that offer profit as well (Reading for Fun Plus).

In the meaningful introduction to his excellent anthology, *Tellers of Tales*, Somerset Maugham says, "It is wise then to read short stories for the entertainment they provide." Mr. Maugham asserts that the short story "must content itself with moving, exciting, and amusing the reader." "Moving, exciting, and amusing"—these words furnish the framework for the first section of Part One in this book. A short story may *excite* the reader—it may offer him thrills. To show that this is true, I include discussion and examples of plot, the surprise ending, and the detective

story. A short story may *amuse* the reader. To show that this is true, I offer discussion and examples of humor and the tall tale. A short story may *move* the reader—it may stir him to emotional response. To show that this is true, I offer discussion and examples of atmosphere, and of the story of the supernatural.

Thus when we are “reading for fun only,” we regard this sort of reading as entirely legitimate. Although Mr. Maugham mischievously imputes to the average reader the “sensation that pleasure is a trifle reprehensible,” surely you and I can honestly disavow such a feeling. And when the pupil has no reason for suspecting that we are hostile to reading for fun, we may hope to win him over to a fairly serious study. Therefore the first section of this book is made to show that we approve short stories for “moving, exciting, and amusing the reader.”

Mr. Maugham, however, goes further. He declares that there is no short story “that will give the reader that thrill, that rapture, that fruitful energy which great art can produce.” Short stories, he thinks, must content themselves with emotional appeal, excitement, amusement. Here, surely, we object. To be sure, there are many stages between mere entertainment and great art; and we do not award the same palms to O. Henry and to Dante. But short stories certainly offer a high-school pupil values beyond the mere fun of entertainment. And if the pupil identifies these values in short stories, even in a rudimentary way, he is the better prepared to recognize them in the reading of novels, which can and do provide the rapture of great art.

What are these values? They are set forth in the second section of Part One. There is first the matter of *setting*. To show that fiction offers values through its use of settings, I have discussed realism, and the restoration of the past, and the specific attitude of the naturalistic writers. There is the matter of *character*. To show that fiction reveals character, I have talked about knowledge of human nature, and about the stream of consciousness, a special method for revealing character. There is the matter of *theme*. To show that fiction offers profit in the challenge of its ideas, I have discussed theme, and the special technique of satire, which is used perhaps more often to drive home a theme than

for any other purpose. In this way, this second section sets forth the various possibilities of "reading for fun plus."

Part One of this book, then, is designed to bring out those factors of the art of fiction that offer pleasure and profit to the reader, beginning with the simple and familiar, and proceeding to the more complex and less familiar. In the course of this analysis, I have tried to treat the various matters that offer special difficulty in the reading of short stories and novels, since I believe that the reading of fiction, like the reading of poetry or of charts and graphs, is a specialized skill that offers its own difficulties, and that these difficulties should be squarely met and grappled with. I think teachers of literature will find the treatments of some of these matters in this book unique among high-school texts.

Part Two contains other good stories in which the concepts and problems treated in Part One are met again, and in which the pupil receives further training in the fiction-reading skill and in the cultivation of his appreciation. One new idea is introduced here: the concept of the single impression. This is simply the principle of unity, which applies in a particularly strict way to short stories because of their brevity. It provides a criterion of excellence for the short story. When the pupil has completed the study of the whole book, he should not only understand the various elements of the art of fiction, but should also have made some progress in distinguishing the good from the bad, and in preferring the good.

In Part One, specific stories are offered as illustrations of specific matters, such as surprise ending, atmosphere, naturalism, etc. This arrangement is essential to the purpose of Part One, namely, to teach concepts, not to teach individual stories for their own sake. Therefore in Part One I subordinate other values in each story to the one value which the story was chosen to exemplify. This may seem to falsify the author's purpose, but it is done for sound pedagogical reasons. In Part Two the case is otherwise. Here the attempt is made to point out all the values contained in each story. Any suggestion of classifying the stories in this Part is rigorously avoided. Classification as an end in itself seems to me not merely wasteful of time, but confusing and repellent to the pupil.

There is much talk these days about the relative merits of the "types approach" and the "theme approach" to literature. A book limited to short stories is, of course, committed to the "types approach," but this fact need not preclude the class discussion of many interesting "themes." In the "Suggestions for Study" the student's attention is directed toward a number of interesting themes. These themes include both personal problems of young people and issues involved in the democratic way of life. Teachers may in class discussion and in outside reading assignments follow up such themes as seem to them to offer the most profitable experiences for their classes.

Perhaps a word should be said about the suggested composition activities included under "Something to Do." Because I believe that most high-school pupils are overpowered by an assignment to write a complete short story, I have limited each composition activity to a specific detail: a bit of conversation, a plot outline, a fragment of "stream of consciousness," etc. If these assignments are performed faithfully, the pupil may at the end of the course feel equal to tackling a complete story.

To this end I have appended at the close of the book a group of "short shorts" and some directions for writing a complete short story. This optional writing project is conceived as a climax to the exercises provided at intervals through the book (under "Something to Do"). The purpose of the short shorts is to suggest the length of story that may be reasonably expected from high-school pupils. (I do not mean to imply that the short short is easier to write than the regular story. Most professional authors avoid short shorts as being at least equally difficult, and financially much less rewarding.)

In the selection of stories to be included in this volume, several principles were observed. In Part One, as already indicated, effectiveness in illustrating the concept was the controlling consideration. In Part Two, the cardinal principles of selection were pupil appeal and variety—not only of subject matter, but also of purpose, tone, quality, nationality, literary method. Keeping the youthful readers in mind, I have included stories of boys and of girls, of men and of horses, of saints and of sinners, of detectives

and of ghosts—stories sacred and profane, restrained and violent, full of action and imbued with emotion. There are plot stories of the Poe—Aldrich—O. Henry tradition, in which the unity is more or less obviously contrived; but there are also examples of the modern “formless” story, in which the unity is “organic”—that is, apparently the natural result of a strictly realistic faithfulness to life. (If any one should object that this latter type of story—well represented in the annual O. Henry and O’Brien-Foley collections—lacks appeal to pupils, I can report that the stories included here have passed the test of use with at least half a dozen classes.) Teaching effectiveness, pupil appeal, and variety, then, have been the first criteria of selection. This does not mean that literary value has been ignored; many of the stories are masterpieces of their kind, and none are devoid of artistic merit. But it does mean that the teacher who is looking for an anthology of conventional selections will not find it here: this book does not pretend to contain the “world’s greatest short stories.” Indeed, some of the stories included here have not, to my knowledge, ever before appeared in book form. The material is fresh rather than conventional.

Throughout the book, the editorial equipment is designed to help the pupil over difficulties; to establish clear concepts of the factors of narrative technique; to lead to fruitful discussions; to provide experiences in vocabulary building, in dramatization, in composition; and to encourage further voluntary reading.

In looking for illustrations of the various factors of narrative technique, I discovered that comparatively few short stories offer much of historical background, few employ the stream-of-consciousness technique. Historical background and stream-of-consciousness technique appear much more frequently in novels than in short stories. Nevertheless I have retained these topics, because I conceive this book as an introduction to prose fiction, and the serious reading of good short stories as an excellent preparation for the reading of novels, both good and great.

But, while the course may be thought of as a training in reading skills, or as a process of forming and improving taste, or as a preparation for the reading of novels, it should not be regarded

merely as preparation for future benefits. As I have said, short stories offer both entertainment and edification; and though the study of them may be regarded as a kind of preparatory training, the benefits must not all be deferred. Both teachers and pupils have a right to expect immediate (as well as ultimate) pleasure and profit. May the stories in this book fulfill that expectation!

I wish at this time to acknowledge the help I received from the many pupils in the Oak Park and River Forest Township High School who read these stories and passed judgment on them.

Also I express my deepest obligation to my colleagues, Mr. John Gehlmann and Mr. Max T. Hohn, who are really co-editors of this book.

R. A. K.

January, 1946

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THE SHORT STORY READER

TO THE BOYS AND GIRLS WHO WILL USE THIS BOOK

THE fact that you are reading this page at all suggests that probably your English class is about to be introduced to the short story as a special type of literature. To be sure, in one sense most of you do not need to be introduced to the short story. You have already experienced many hours of enjoyment from reading short stories in magazines and in books. The term "short story" is familiar to you; you like short stories; as an old acquaintance, you need no introduction. Why, then, should you take a group of short stories as a subject of study? What good will you derive from studying this book?

In *Part One* of this book the stories are divided into two groups, labeled "Reading for Fun Only" and "Reading for Fun Plus." In the first group I have put comparatively easy stories—good stories, but not too difficult for you to read and enjoy without help. You will find in them familiar sources of pleasure; nevertheless, I shall point out in them some new features that I hope will increase your enjoyment. The title of the second group, "Reading for Fun Plus," shows that these stories, too, are expected to give you pleasure; but it shows also that they offer something more. They multiply the benefits of reading, by providing certain other values. In this sense they are superior stories. I earnestly hope that, once you have experienced these values and become aware of them, your future reading will include more and more stories of this richer kind.

Part Two offers additional experiences in reading for pleasure and profit. But that isn't all. It provides also a means of testing the artistic worth of a short story. This means is the single impression. You ask yourself, "What was the single effect the author was trying to create? How well did he succeed in creating

it?" These are the questions by which to measure the artistic worth of a story. If you will apply them to each story you read, you will gradually develop literary judgment. In short, I hope that *Part Two* will make you a connoisseur of short stories—one who knows what makes a story good, and prefers a good story to one not so good.

So my book is intended to help you discover new sources of pleasure and profit in reading short stories. It is intended to help you develop your literary judgment. And it is intended to promote in you a life-long habit of reading good short stories—reading that will repay you in the continued pleasure it will yield, and in the wealth of understandings which good literature provides in addition to the pleasure. Furthermore, if this introductory study of fiction leads you on to an enjoyment of the novel, the older brother of the short story, your profit and my satisfaction will be increased tenfold.

These are hopes. But two things I am sure of. One is that you will get fun out of most of these stories. I know this, because I have tried them out on high-school boys and girls. The other is that there is a great variety of subject matter in these stories. You will find in them boys and girls, old maids and kidnapers, murderers and detectives, soldiers and orphans, coyotes and cats, track meets and battles, bankers and flirts and ghosts. Indeed, the figures in these stories are as varied as in the pageant of life itself.

And now it is time to start reading. Enjoy yourself; reading should be fun. But be willing also to learn what must be learned; progress does not come without some effort. My own experience persuades me that the reward is richly worth that effort. I trust you will take my word for that. Not all of the class will make the same gains in skill and understanding and appreciation; but to each of you I say, "Grow as much as you can."

READING FOR FUN ONLY

ACTION AND PLOT: THRILLS AND SUSPENSE

“SHORT STORY” is not just a vague name for any short piece of writing, or even any short narrative. Like a poem or a play, a short story is made up of definite elements. There are not many of these elements; but they are very important. In a short story certain events will happen; therefore, there is always some *action*. Furthermore, the events of greatest interest to human beings are those that happen to people. Hence you find that a short story, which relates events, also involves *characters*—the people to whom the events happen. Finally, the events of the story can’t just happen in a vacuum; they occur at a given time, in a given place. The time and place in which the characters experience the action constitute the *setting* of the story. These three things, *action*, *characters*, and *setting*, are the basic elements of the story-teller’s art.

When you pick up a popular magazine or novel, you are probably looking merely for an entertaining way to pass the time. This desire for light entertainment is most easily satisfied with stories full of rapid, exciting *action*. Such stories offer us entertainment, relaxation, and escape from a humdrum or troubled existence into a world of adventure and romance. Most readers know that really great stories contain certain other values beyond the *thrills* that come from action; nevertheless, stories consisting mostly of action have a just claim to our attention as a popular form of entertainment.

The pleasure we obtain from the action of a story is considerably heightened when the action takes the form of a struggle and our interest is held by the desire to see who finally wins. When a story involves a conflict between two opposing forces, it is said to have a *plot*. Not all stories have plots; but in those stories which do have plots, the *suspense* provided by the ups and downs of the conflict is often the chief source of interest and enjoyment.

THE MOST DANGEROUS GAME

Richard Connell

"The Most Dangerous Game" is the best-known story its author ever wrote. Most readers agree that they have never read another plot story that equals it for pure thrills. I hope you will find it as thrilling as I do.

"Off there to the right—somewhere—is a large island," said Whitney. "It's rather a mystery—"

"What island is it?" Rainsford asked.

"The old charts call it 'Ship-Trap Island,'" Whitney replied. "A suggestive name, isn't it? Sailors have a curious dread of the place. I don't know why. Some superstition—"

"Can't see it," remarked Rainsford, trying to peer through the dank tropical night that was palpable as it pressed its thick warm blackness in upon the yacht.

"You've good eyes," said Whitney, with a laugh, "and I've seen you pick off a moose moving in the brown fall bush at four hundred yards, but even you can't see four miles or so through a moonless Caribbean night."

"Nor four yards," admitted Rainsford. "Ugh! It's like moist black velvet."

"It will be light enough in Rio," promised Whitney. "We should make it in a few days. I hope the jaguar guns have come from Purdey's. We should have some good hunting up the Amazon. Great sport, hunting."

"The best sport in the world," agreed Rainsford.

"For the hunter," amended Whitney. "Not for the jaguar."

"Don't talk rot, Whitney," said Rainsford. "You're a big-game hunter, not a philosopher. Who cares how a jaguar feels?"

"Perhaps the jaguar does," observed Whitney.

"Bah! They've no understanding."

"Even so, I rather think they understand one thing—fear. The fear of pain and the fear of death."

"Nonsense," laughed Rainsford. "This hot weather is making you soft, Whitney. Be a realist. The world is made up of two classes—the hunters and the huntees. Luckily, you and I are hunters. Do you think we've passed that island yet?"

"I can't tell in the dark. I hope so."

"Why?" asked Rainsford.

"The place has a reputation—a bad one."

"Cannibals?" suggested Rainsford.

"Hardly. Even cannibals wouldn't live in such a God-forsaken place. But it's gotten into sailor lore, somehow. Didn't you notice that the crew's nerves seemed a bit jumpy today?"

"They were a bit strange, now you mention it. Even Captain Nielsen—"

"Yes, even that tough-minded old Swede, who'd go up to the devil himself and ask him for a light. Those fishy blue eyes held a look I never saw there before. All I could get out of him was: 'This place has an evil name among seafaring men, sir.' Then he said to me, very gravely: 'Don't you feel anything?'—as if the air about us was actually poisonous. Now, you mustn't laugh when I tell you this—I did feel something like a sudden chill.

"There was no breeze. The sea was as flat as a plate-glass window. We were drawing near the island then. What I felt was a—
—a mental chill; a sort of sudden dread."

"Pure imagination," said Rainsford. "One superstitious sailor can taint the whole ship's company with his fear."

"Maybe. But sometimes I think sailors have an extra sense that tells them when they are in danger. Sometimes I think evil is a tangible thing—with wave lengths, just as sound and light have. An evil place can, so to speak, broadcast vibrations of evil. Anyhow, I'm glad we're getting out of this zone. Well, I think I'll turn in now, Rainsford."

"I'm not sleepy," said Rainsford. "I'm going to smoke another pipe up on the after deck."

"Good night, then, Rainsford. See you at breakfast."

"Right. Good night, Whitney"

There was no sound in the night as Rainsford sat there but the muffled throb of the engine that drove the yacht swiftly through the darkness, and the swish and ripple of the wash of the propeller.

Rainsford, reclining in a steamer chair, indolently puffed on his favorite brier. The sensuous drowsiness of the night was on him. "It's so dark," he thought, "that I could sleep without closing my eyes; the night would be my eyelids—"

An abrupt sound startled him. Off to the right he heard it, and his ears, expert in such matters, could not be mistaken. Again he heard the sound, and again. Somewhere, off in the blackness, someone had fired a gun three times.

Rainsford sprang up and moved quickly to the rail, mystified. He strained his eyes in the direction from which the reports had come, but it was like trying to see through a blanket. He leaped upon the rail and balanced himself there, to get greater elevation; his pipe, striking a rope, was knocked from his mouth. He lunged for it; a short, hoarse cry came from his lips as he realized he had reached too far and had lost his balance. The cry was pinched off short as the blood-warm waters of the Caribbean Sea closed over his head.

He struggled up to the surface and tried to cry out, but the wash from the speeding yacht slapped him in the face and the salt water in his open mouth made him gag and strangle. Desperately he struck out with strong strokes after the receding lights of the yacht, but he stopped before he had swum fifty feet. A certain cool-headedness had come to him; it was not the first time he had been in a tight place. There was a chance that his cries could be heard by someone aboard the yacht, but that chance was slender, and grew more slender as the yacht raced on. He wrestled himself out of his clothes, and shouted with all his power. The lights of the yacht became faint and ever-vanishing fireflies; then they were blotted out entirely by the night.

Rainsford remembered the shots. They had come from the right, and doggedly he swam in that direction, swimming with

slow, deliberate strokes, conserving his strength. For a seemingly endless time he fought the sea. He began to count his strokes; he could do possibly a hundred more and then—

Rainsford heard a sound. It came out of the darkness, a high screaming sound, the sound of an animal in an extremity of anguish and terror.

He did not recognize the animal that made the sound; he did not try to; with fresh vitality he swam toward the sound. He heard it again; then it was cut short by another noise, crisp, staccato.

“Pistol shot,” muttered Rainsford, swimming on. ✓

Ten minutes of determined effort brought another sound to his ears—the most welcome he had ever heard—the muttering and growling of the sea breaking on a rocky shore. He was almost on the rocks before he saw them; on a night less calm he would have been shattered against them. With his remaining strength he dragged himself from the swirling waters. Jagged crags appeared to jut up into the opaqueness; he forced himself upward, hand over hand. Gasping, his hands raw, he reached a flat place at the top. Dense jungle came down to the very edge of the cliffs. What perils that tangle of trees and underbrush might hold for him did not concern Rainsford just then. All he knew was that he was safe from his enemy, the sea, and that utter weariness was on him. He flung himself down at the jungle edge and tumbled headlong into the deepest sleep of his life.

When he opened his eyes he knew from the position of the sun that it was late in the afternoon. Sleep had given him new vigor; a sharp hunger was picking at him. He looked about him, almost cheerfully.

“Where there are pistol shots, there are men. Where there are men, there is food,” he thought. But what kind of men, he wondered, in so forbidding a place? An unbroken front of snarled and ragged jungle fringed the shore.

He saw no sign of a trail through the closely knit web of weeds and trees; it was easier to go along the shore, and Rainsford floundered along by the water. Not far from where he had landed, he stopped.

"Good night, then, Rainsford. See you at breakfast."

"Right. Good night, Whitney."

There was no sound in the night as Rainsford sat there but the muffled throb of the engine that drove the yacht swiftly through the darkness, and the swish and ripple of the wash of the propeller.

Rainsford, reclining in a steamer chair, indolently puffed on his favorite brier. The sensuous drowsiness of the night was on him. "It's so dark," he thought, "that I could sleep without closing my eyes; the night would be my eyelids—"

An abrupt sound startled him. Off to the right he heard it, and his ears, expert in such matters, could not be mistaken. Again he heard the sound, and again. Somewhere, off in the blackness, someone had fired a gun three times.

Rainsford sprang up and moved quickly to the rail, mystified. He strained his eyes in the direction from which the reports had come, but it was like trying to see through a blanket. He leaped upon the rail and balanced himself there, to get greater elevation; his pipe, striking a rope, was knocked from his mouth. He lunged for it; a short, hoarse cry came from his lips as he realized he had reached too far and had lost his balance. The cry was pinched off short as the blood-warm waters of the Caribbean Sea closed over his head.

He struggled up to the surface and tried to cry out, but the wash from the speeding yacht slapped him in the face and the salt water in his open mouth made him gag and strangle. Desperately he struck out with strong strokes after the receding lights of the yacht, but he stopped before he had swum fifty feet. A certain cool-headedness had come to him; it was not the first time he had been in a tight place. There was a chance that his cries could be heard by someone aboard the yacht, but that chance was slender, and grew more slender as the yacht raced on. He wrestled himself out of his clothes, and shouted with all his power. The lights of the yacht became faint and ever-vanishing fireflies; then they were blotted out entirely by the night.

Rainsford remembered the shots. They had come from the right, and doggedly he swam in that direction, swimming with

slow, deliberate strokes, conserving his strength. For a seemingly endless time he fought the sea. He began to count his strokes; he could do possibly a hundred more and then—

Rainsford heard a sound. It came out of the darkness, a high screaming sound, the sound of an animal in an extremity of anguish and terror.

He did not recognize the animal that made the sound; he did not try to; with fresh vitality he swam toward the sound. He heard it again; then it was cut short by another noise, crisp, staccato

“Pistol shot,” muttered Rainsford, swimming on.

Ten minutes of determined effort brought another sound to his ears—the most welcome he had ever heard—the muttering and growling of the sea breaking on a rocky shore. He was almost on the rocks before he saw them; on a night less calm he would have been shattered against them. With his remaining strength he dragged himself from the swirling waters. Jagged crags appeared to jut up into the opaqueness; he forced himself upward, hand over hand. Gasping, his hands raw, he reached a flat place at the top. Dense jungle came down to the very edge of the cliffs. What perils that tangle of trees and underbrush might hold for him did not concern Rainsford just then. All he knew was that he was safe from his enemy, the sea, and that utter weariness was on him. He flung himself down at the jungle edge and tumbled headlong into the deepest sleep of his life.

When he opened his eyes he knew from the position of the sun that it was late in the afternoon. Sleep had given him new vigor; a sharp hunger was picking at him. He looked about him, almost cheerfully.

“Where there are pistol shots, there are men. Where there are men, there is food,” he thought. But what kind of men, he wondered, in so forbidding a place? An unbroken front of snarled and ragged jungle fringed the shore.

He saw no sign of a trail through the closely knit web of weeds and trees; it was easier to go along the shore, and Rainsford floundered along by the water. Not far from where he had landed, he stopped.

Some wounded thing, by the evidence, a large animal, had thrashed about in the underbrush; the jungle weeds were crushed down and the moss was lacerated; one patch of weeds was stained crimson. A small, glittering object not far away caught Rainsford's eye and he picked it up. It was an empty cartridge.

"A twenty-two," he remarked. "That's odd. It must have been a fairly large animal too. The hunter had his nerve with him to tackle it with a light gun. It's clear that the brute put up a fight. I suppose the first three shots I heard was when the hunter flushed his quarry and wounded it. The last shot was when he trailed it here and finished it."

He examined the ground closely and found what he had hoped to find—the print of hunting boots. They pointed along the cliff in the direction he had been going. Eagerly he hurried along, now slipping on a rotten log or a loose stone, but making headway; night was beginning to settle down on the island.

Bleak darkness was blacking out the sea and jungle when Rainsford sighted the lights. He came upon them as he turned a crook in the coast line, and his first thought was that he had come upon a village, for there were many lights. But as he forged along he saw to his great astonishment that all the lights were in one enormous building—a lofty structure with pointed towers plunging upward into the gloom. His eyes made out the shadowy outlines of a palatial château; it was set on a high bluff, and on three sides of it cliffs dived down to where the sea licked greedy lips in the shadows.

"Mirage," thought Rainsford. But it was no mirage, he found, when he opened the tall spiked iron gate. The stone steps were real enough; the massive door with a leering gargoyle for a knocker was real enough; yet above it all hung an air of unreality.

He lifted the knocker, and it creaked up stiffly, as if it had never before been used. He let it fall, and it startled him with its booming loudness. He thought he heard steps within; the door remained closed. Again Rainsford lifted the heavy knocker, and let it fall. The door opened then, opened as suddenly as if it were on a spring, and Rainsford stood blinking in the river of glaring gold light that poured out. The first thing Rainsford's eyes discerned was the largest man Rainsford had ever seen—a gigantic creature,

solidly made and black-bearded to the waist. In his hand the man held a long-barreled revolver, and he was pointing it straight at Rainsford's heart.

Out of the snarl of beard two small eyes regarded Rainsford.

"Don't be alarmed," said Rainsford, with a smile which he hoped was disarming. "I'm no robber. I fell off a yacht. My name is Sanger Rainsford of New York City."

The menacing look in the eyes did not change. The revolver pointed as rigidly as if the giant were a statue. He gave no sign that he understood Rainsford's words, or that he had even heard them. He was dressed in uniform, a black uniform trimmed with gray astrakhan.

"I'm Sanger Rainsford of New York," Rainsford began again. "I fell off a yacht. I am hungry."

The man's only answer was to raise with his thumb the hammer of his revolver. Then Rainsford saw the man's free hand go to his forehead in a military salute, and he saw him click his heels together and stand at attention. Another man was coming down the broad marble steps, an erect, slender man in evening clothes. He advanced to Rainsford and held out his hand.

In a cultivated voice marked by a slight accent that gave it added precision and deliberateness, he said: "It is a very great pleasure and honor to welcome Mr. Sanger Rainsford, the celebrated hunter, to my home."

Automatically Rainsford shook the man's hand.

"I've read your book about hunting snow leopards in Tibet, you see," explained the man. "I am General Zaroff."

Rainsford's first impression was that the man was singularly handsome; his second was that there was an original, almost bizarre quality about the general's face. He was a tall man past middle age, for his hair was a vivid white; but his thick eyebrows and pointed military mustache were as black as the night from which Rainsford had come. His eyes, too, were black and very bright. He had high cheek bones, a sharp-cut nose, a spare, dark face, the face of a man used to giving orders, the face of an aristocrat. Turning to the giant in uniform, the general made a sign. The giant put away his pistol, saluted, withdrew.

"Ivan is an incredibly strong fellow," remarked the general, "but he has the misfortune to be deaf and dumb. A simple fellow, but, I'm afraid, like all his race, a bit of a savage."

"Is he Russian?"

"He is a Cossack," said the general, and his smile showed red lips and pointed teeth. "So am I."

"Come," he said, "we shouldn't be chatting here. We can talk later. Now you want clothes, food, rest. You shall have them. This is a most restful spot."

Ivan had reappeared, and the general spoke to him with lips that moved but gave forth no sound.

"Follow Ivan, if you please, Mr. Rainsford," said the general. "I was about to have my dinner when you came. I'll wait for you. You'll find that my clothes will fit you, I think."

It was to a huge, beam-ceilinged bedroom with a canopied bed big enough for six men that Rainsford followed the silent giant. Ivan laid out an evening suit, and Rainsford, as he put it on, noticed that it came from a London tailor who ordinarily cut and sewed for none below the rank of duke.

The dining room to which Ivan conducted him was in many ways remarkable. There was a medieval magnificence about it; it suggested a baronial hall of feudal times with its oaken panels, its high ceiling, its vast refectory tables where twoscore men could sit down to eat. About the hall were the mounted heads of many animals—lions, tigers, elephants, moose, bears; larger or more perfect specimens Rainsford had never seen. At the great table the general was sitting, alone.

"You'll have a cocktail, Mr. Rainsford," he suggested. The cocktail was surpassingly good; and, Rainsford noted, the table appointments were of the finest—the linen, the crystal, the silver, the china.

They were eating *borsch*,¹ the rich, red soup with whipped cream so dear to Russian palates. Half apologetically General Zaroff said: "We do our best to preserve the amenities of civilization here. Please forgive any lapses. We are well off the beaten track, you

¹ *borsch*: Russian beet soup

know. Do you think the champagne has suffered from its long ocean trip?"

"Not in the least," declared Rainsford. He was finding the general a most thoughtful and affable host, a true cosmopolite. But there was one small trait of the general's that made Rainsford uncomfortable. Whenever he looked up from his plate he found the general studying him, appraising him narrowly.

"Perhaps," said General Zaroff, "you were surprised that I recognized your name. You see, I read all books on hunting published in English, French, and Russian. I have but one passion in my life, Mr. Rainsford, and it is the hunt."

"You have some wonderful heads here," said Rainsford as he ate a particularly well cooked *filet mignon*.² "That Cape buffalo is the largest I ever saw."

"Oh, that fellow. Yes, he was a monster."

"Did he charge you?"

"Hurled me against a tree," said the general. "Fractured my skull. But I got the brute."

"I've always thought," said Rainsford, "that the Cape buffalo is the most dangerous of all big game."

For a moment the general did not reply; he was smiling his curious red-lipped smile. Then he said slowly: "No. You are wrong, sir. The Cape buffalo is not the most dangerous big game." He sipped his wine. "Here in my preserve on this island," he said in the same slow tone, "I hunt more dangerous game."

Rainsford expressed his surprise. "Is there big game on this island?"

The general nodded. "The biggest."

"Really?"

"Oh, it isn't here naturally, of course. I have to stock the island."

"What have you imported, general?" Rainsford asked. "Tigers?"

The general smiled. "No," he said. "Hunting tigers ceased to interest me some years ago. I exhausted their possibilities, you

² *filet mignon* (fê lê' mē nyông') a round piece of tenderloin steak.

see. No thrill left in tigers, no real danger. I live for danger, Mr. Rainsford."

The general took from his pocket a gold cigarette case and offered his guest a long black cigarette with a silver tip; it was perfumed and gave off a smell like incense.

"We will have some capital hunting, you and I," said the general. "I shall be most glad to have your society."

"But what game—" began Rainsford.

"I'll tell you," said the general. "You will be amused, I know. I think I may say, in all modesty, that I have done a rare thing. I have invented a new sensation. May I pour you another glass of port?"

"Thank you, general."

The general filled both glasses, and said: "God makes some men poets. Some He makes kings, some beggars. Me He made a hunter. My hand was made for the trigger, my father said. He was a very rich man with a quarter of a million acres in the Crimea, and he was an ardent sportsman. When I was only five years old he gave me a little gun, specially made in Moscow for me, to shoot sparrows with. When I shot some of his prize turkeys with it, he did not punish me; he complimented me on my marksmanship. I killed my first bear in the Caucasus when I was ten. My whole life has been one prolonged hunt. I went into the army—it was expected of noblemen's sons—and for a time commanded a division of Cossack cavalry, but my real interest was always the hunt. I have hunted every kind of game in every land. It would be impossible for me to tell you how many animals I have killed."

The general puffed at his cigarette.

"After the debacle in Russia I left the country, for it was imprudent for an officer of the Czar to stay there. Many noble Russians lost everything. I, luckily, had invested heavily in American securities, so I shall never have to open a tea room in Monte Carlo or drive a taxi in Paris. Naturally, I continued to hunt—grizzlies in your Rockies, crocodile in the Ganges, rhinoceroses in East Africa. It was in Africa that the Cape buffalo hit me and laid me up for six months. As soon as I recovered I started for the Amazon to hunt jaguars, for I had heard they were unusually cunning.

They weren't." The Cossack sighed. "They were no match at all for a hunter with his wits about him, and a high-powered rifle. I was bitterly disappointed. I was lying in my tent with a splitting headache one night when a terrible thought pushed its way into my mind. Hunting was beginning to bore me! And hunting, remember, had been my life. I have heard that in America business men often go to pieces when they give up the business that has been their life."

"Yes, that's so," said Rainsford.

The general smiled. "I had no wish to go to pieces," he said. "I must do something. Now, mine is an analytical mind, Mr. Rainsford. Doubtless that is why I enjoy the problems of the chase."

"No doubt, General Zaroff."

"So," continued the general, "I asked myself why the hunt no longer fascinated me. You are much younger than I am, Mr. Rainsford, and have not hunted as much, but you perhaps can guess the answer."

"What was it?"

"Simply this: hunting had ceased to be what you call 'a sporting proposition.' It had become too easy. I always got my quarry. Always. There is no greater bore than perfection."

The general lit a fresh cigarette.

"No animal had a chance with me any more. That is no boast; it is a mathematical certainty. The animal had nothing but his legs and his instinct. Instinct is no match for reason. When I thought of this it was a tragic moment for me, I can tell you."

Rainsford leaned across the table, absorbed in what his host was saying.

"It came to me as an inspiration what I must do," the general went on.

"And that was?"

The general smiled the quiet smile of one who has faced an obstacle and surmounted it with success. "I had to invent a new animal to hunt," he said.

"A new animal? You're joking."

"Not at all," said the general. "I never joke about hunting. I needed a new animal. I found one. So I bought this island, built this house, and here I do my hunting. The island is perfect for my purposes—there are jungles with a maze of trails in them, hills, swamps—"

"But the animal, General Zaroff?"

"Oh," said the general, "it supplies me with the most exciting hunting in the world. No other hunting compares with it for an instant. Every day I hunt, and I never grow bored now, for I have a quarry with which I can match my wits."

Rainsford's bewilderment showed in his face.

"I wanted the ideal animal to hunt," explained the general. "So I said: 'What are the attributes of an ideal quarry?' And the answer was, of course: 'It must have courage, cunning, and, above all, it must be able to reason.'"

"But no animal can reason," objected Rainsford.

"My dear fellow," said the general, "there is one that can."

"But you can't mean—" gasped Rainsford.

"And why not?"

"I can't believe you are serious, General Zaroff. This is a grisly joke."

"Why should I not be serious? I am speaking of hunting."

"Hunting? Good God, General Zaroff, what you speak of is murder."

The general laughed with entire good nature. He regarded Rainsford quizzically. "I refuse to believe that so modern and civilized a young man as you seem to be harbors romantic ideas about the value of human life. Surely your experiences in the war—"

"Did not make me condone cold-blooded murder," finished Rainsford stiffly.

Laughter shook the general. "How extraordinarily droll you are!" he said. "One does not expect nowadays to find a young man of the educated class, even in America, with such a naive, and, if I may say so, mid-Victorian point of view. It's like finding a snuffbox in a limousine. Ah, well, doubtless you had Puritan ancestors. So many Americans appear to have had. I'll wager you'll

forget your notions when you go hunting with me. You've a genuine new thrill in store for you, Mr. Rainsford."

"Thank you, I'm a hunter, not a murderer."

"Dear me," said the general, quite unruffled, "again that unpleasant word. But I think I can show you that your scruples are quite ill founded."

"Yes?"

"Life is for the strong, to be lived by the strong, and, if need be, taken by the strong. The weak of the world were put here to give the strong pleasure. I am strong. Why should I not use my gift? If I wish to hunt, why should I not? I hunt the scum of the earth—sailors from tramp ships—lascars,³ blacks, Chinese, whites, mongrels—a thoroughbred horse or hound is worth more than a score of them."

"But they are men," said Rainsford hotly.

"Precisely," said the general. "That is why I use them. It gives me pleasure. They can reason, after a fashion. So they are dangerous."

"But where do you get them?"

The general's left eyelid fluttered down in a wink. "This island is called Ship Trap," he answered. "Sometimes an angry god of the high seas sends them to me. Sometimes, when Providence is not so kind, I help Providence a bit. Come to the window with me."

Rainsford went to the window and looked out toward the sea.

"Watch! Out there!" exclaimed the general, pointing into the night. Rainsford's eyes saw only blackness, and then, as the general pressed a button, far out to sea Rainsford saw the flash of lights.

The general chuckled. "They indicate a channel," he said, "where there's none; giant rocks with razor edges crouch like a sea monster with wide-open jaws. They can crush a ship as easily as I crush this nut." He dropped a walnut on the hardwood floor and brought his heel grinding down on it. "Oh, yes," he said, casually, as if in answer to a question, "I have electricity. We try to be civilized here."

³ lascars: East Indian native sailors

"Civilized? And you shoot down men?"

A trace of anger was in the general's black eyes, but it was there for but a second, and he said, in his most pleasant manner: "Dear me, what a righteous young man you are! I assure you I do not do the thing you suggest. That would be barbarous. I treat these visitors with every consideration. They get plenty of good food and exercise. They get into splendid physical condition. You shall see for yourself tomorrow."

"What do you mean?"

"We'll visit my training school," smiled the general. "It's in the cellar. I have about a dozen pupils down there now. They're from the Spanish bark *San Lucar* that had the bad luck to go on the rocks out there. A very inferior lot, I regret to say. Poor specimens and more accustomed to the deck than to the jungle."

He raised his hand, and Ivan, who served as waiter, brought thick Turkish coffee. Rainsford, with an effort, held his tongue in check.

"It's a game, you see," pursued the general blandly. "I suggest to one of them that we go hunting. I give him a supply of food and an excellent hunting knife. I give him three hours' start. I am to follow, armed only with a pistol of the smallest caliber and range. If my quarry eludes me for three whole days, he wins the game. If I find him"—the general smiled—"he loses."

"Suppose he refuses to be hunted?"

"Oh," said the general, "I give him his option, of course. He need not play that game if he doesn't wish to. If he does not wish to hunt, I turn him over to Ivan. Ivan once had the honor of serving as official knouter to the Great White Czar, and he has his own ideas of sport. Invariably, Mr. Rainsford, invariably they choose the hunt."

"And if they win?"

The smile on the general's face widened. "To date I have not lost," he said. Then he added, hastily: "I don't wish you to think me a braggart, Mr. Rainsford. Many of them afford only the most elementary sort of problem. Occasionally I strike a tartar. One almost did win. I eventually had to use the dogs."

"The dogs?"

"This way, please. I'll show you."

The general steered Rainsford to a window. The lights from the windows sent a flickering illumination that made grotesque patterns on the courtyard below, and Rainsford could see moving about there a dozen or so huge black shapes; as they turned toward him, their eyes glittered greenly.

"A rather good lot, I think," observed the general. "They are let out at seven every night. If anyone should try to get into my house—or out of it—something extremely regrettable would occur to him." He hummed a snatch of song from the *Folies Bergère*.

"And now," said the general, "I want to show you my new collection of heads. Will you come with me to the library?"

"I hope," said Rainsford, "that you will excuse me tonight, General Zaroff. I'm really not feeling well."

"Ah, indeed?" the general inquired solicitously. "Well, I suppose that's only natural, after your long swim. You need a good, restful night's sleep. Tomorrow you'll feel like a new man, I'll wager. Then we'll hunt, eh? I've one rather promising prospect—" Rainsford was hurrying from the room.

"Sorry you can't go with me tonight," called the general. "I expect rather fair sport—a big, strong black. He looks resourceful— Well, good night, Mr. Rainsford; I hope you have a good night's rest."

The bed was good, and the pajamas of the softest silk, and he was tired in every fiber of his being, but nevertheless Rainsford could not quiet his brain with the opiate of sleep. He lay, eyes wide open. Once he thought he heard stealthy steps in the corridor outside his room. He sought to throw open the door; it would not open. He went to the window and looked out. His room was high up in one of the towers. The lights of the château were out now, and it was dark and silent, but there was a fragment of fallow moon, and by its wan light he could see, dimly, the courtyard; there, weaving in and out in the pattern of shadow, were black, noiseless forms; the hounds heard him at the window and looked up, expectantly, with their green eyes. Rainsford went back to the bed and lay down. By many methods he tried to put himself to sleep. He had achieved a doze when, just as morning began to come, he heard, far off in the jungle, the faint report of a pistol.

General Zaroff did not appear until luncheon. He was dressed faultlessly in the tweeds of a country squire. He was solicitous about the state of Rainsford's health.

"As for me," sighed the general, "I do not feel so well. I am worried, Mr. Rainsford. Last night I detected traces of my old complaint."

To Rainsford's questioning glance the general said: "Ennui. Boredom."

Then, taking a second helping of *Crêpes Suzette*, the general explained: "The hunting was not good last night. The fellow lost his head. He made a straight trail that offered no problems at all. That's the trouble with these sailors; they have dull brains to begin with, and they do not know how to get about in the woods. They do excessively stupid and obvious things. It's most annoying. Will you have another glass of *Chablis*, Mr. Rainsford?"

"General," said Rainsford firmly, "I wish to leave this island at once."

The general raised his thickets of eyebrows; he seemed hurt. "But, my dear fellow," the general protested, "you've only just come. You've had no hunting—"

"I wish to go today," said Rainsford. He saw the dead black eyes of the general on him, studying him. General Zaroff's face suddenly brightened.

He filled Rainsford's glass with venerable *Chablis* from a dusty bottle.

"Tonight," said the general, "we will hunt—you and I."

Rainsford shook his head. "No, general," he said. "I will not hunt."

The general shrugged his shoulders and delicately ate a hothouse grape. "As you wish, my friend," he said. "The choice rests entirely with you. But may I not venture to suggest that you will find my idea of sport more diverting than Ivan's?"

He nodded toward the corner to where the giant stood, scowling, his thick arms crossed on his hogshead of chest.

"You don't mean—" cried Rainsford.

"My dear fellow," said the general, "have I not told you I always mean what I say about hunting? This is really an inspira-

tion. I drink to a foeman worthy of my steel—at last.” The general raised his glass, but Rainsford sat staring at him.

“You’ll find this game worth playing,” the general said enthusiastically. “Your brain against mine. Your woodcraft against mine. Your strength and stamina against mine. Outdoor chess! And the stake is not without value, eh?”

“And if I win—” began Rainsford huskily.

“I’ll cheerfully acknowledge myself defeated if I do not find you by midnight of the third day,” said General Zaroff. “My sloop will place you on the mainland near a town.” The general read what Rainsford was thinking.

“Oh, you can trust me,” said the Cossack. “I will give you my word as a gentleman and a sportsman. Of course you, in turn, must agree to say nothing of your visit here.”

“I’ll agree to nothing of the kind,” said Rainsford.

“Oh,” said the general, “in that case— But why discuss that now? Three days hence we can discuss it over a bottle of *Veuve Cliquot*, unless—”

The general sipped his wine.

Then a businesslike air animated him. “Ivan,” he said to Rainsford, “will supply you with hunting clothes, food, a knife. I suggest you wear moccasins; they leave a poorer trail. I suggest, too, that you avoid the big swamp in the southeast corner of the island. We call it Death Swamp. There’s quicksand there. One foolish fellow tried it. The deplorable part of it was that Lazarus followed him. You can imagine my feelings, Mr. Rainsford. I loved Lazarus; he was the finest hound in my pack. Well, I must beg you to excuse me now. I always take a siesta after lunch. You’ll hardly have time for a nap, I fear. You’ll want to start, no doubt. I shall not follow till dusk. Hunting at night is so much more exciting than by day, don’t you think? *Au revoir*, Mr. Rainsford, *au revoir*.” General Zaroff, with a deep, courtly bow, strolled from the room.

From another door came Ivan. Under one arm he carried khaki hunting clothes, a haversack of food, a leather sheath containing a long-bladed hunting knife; his right hand rested on a cocked revolver thrust in the crimson sash about his waist.

Rainsford had fought his way through the bush for two hours. "I must keep my nerve. I must keep my nerve," he said through tight teeth.

He had not been entirely clear-headed when the château gates snapped shut behind him. His whole idea at first was to put distance between himself and General Zaroff, and, to this end, he had plunged along, spurred on by the sharp rowels of something very like panic. Now he had got a grip on himself, had stopped, and was taking stock of himself and the situation. He saw that straight flight was futile; inevitably it would bring him face to face with the sea. He was in a picture with a frame of water, and his operations, clearly, must take place within that frame.

"I'll give him a trail to follow," muttered Rainsford, and he struck off from the rude path he had been following into the trackless wilderness. He executed a series of intricate loops; he doubled on his trail again and again, recalling all the lore of the fox hunt, and all the dodges of the fox. Night found him leg-weary, with hands and face lashed by the branches, on a thickly wooded ridge. He knew it would be insane to blunder on through the dark, even if he had the strength. His need for rest was imperative and he thought: "I have played the fox, now I must play the cat of the fable." A big tree with a thick trunk and outspread branches was near by, and, taking care to leave not the slightest mark, he climbed up into the crotch, and stretching out on one of the broad limbs, after a fashion, rested. Rest brought him new confidence and almost a feeling of security. Even so zealous a hunter as General Zaroff could not trace him there, he told himself; only the devil himself could follow that complicated trail through the jungle after dark. But, perhaps the general was a devil—

An apprehensive night crawled slowly by like a wounded snake, and sleep did not visit Rainsford, although the silence of a dead world was on the jungle. Toward morning when a dingy gray was varnishing the sky, the cry of some startled bird focused Rainsford's attention in that direction. Something was coming through the bush, coming slowly, carefully, coming by the same winding way Rainsford had come. He flattened himself down on the limb,

and through a screen of leaves almost as thick as tapestry, he watched. . . . That which was approaching was a man.

It was General Zaroff. He made his way along with his eyes fixed in utmost concentration on the ground before him. He paused, almost beneath the tree, dropped to his knees and studied the ground. Rainsford's impulse was to hurl himself down like a panther, but he saw that the general's right hand held something metallic—a small automatic pistol.

The hunter shook his head several times, as if he were puzzled. Then he straightened up and took from his case one of his black cigarettes; its pungent incenselike smoke floated up to Rainsford's nostrils.

Rainsford held his breath. The general's eyes had left the ground and were traveling inch by inch up the tree. Rainsford froze there, every muscle tensed for a spring. But the sharp eyes of the hunter stopped before they reached the limb where Rainsford lay; a smile spread over his brown face. Very deliberately he blew a smoke ring into the air; then he turned his back on the tree and walked carelessly away, back along the trail he had come. The swish of the underbrush against his hunting boots grew fainter and fainter.

The pent-up air burst hotly from Rainsford's lungs. His first thought made him feel sick and numb. The general could follow a trail through the woods at night; he could follow an extremely difficult trail; he must have uncanny powers; only by the merest chance had the Cossack failed to see his quarry.

Rainsford's second thought was even more terrible. It sent a shudder of cold horror through his whole being. Why had the general smiled? Why had he turned back?

Rainsford did not want to believe what his reason told him was true, but the truth was as evident as the sun that had by now pushed through the morning mists. The general was playing with him! The general was saving him for another day's sport! The Cossack was the cat; he was the mouse. Then it was that Rainsford knew the full meaning of terror.

"I will not lose my nerve. I will not."

He slid down from the tree, and struck off again into the woods. His face was set and he forced the machinery of his mind to function. Three hundred yards from his hiding place he stopped where a huge dead tree leaned precariously on a smaller, living one. Throwing off his sack of food, Rainsford took his knife from its sheath and began to work with all his energy.

The job was finished at last, and he threw himself down behind a fallen log a hundred feet away. He did not have to wait long. The cat was coming again to play with the mouse.

Following the trail with the sureness of a bloodhound came General Zaroff. Nothing escaped those searching black eyes, no crushed blade of grass, no bent twig, no mark, no matter how faint, in the moss. So intent was the Cossack on his stalking that he was upon the thing Rainsford had made before he saw it. His foot touched the protruding bough that was the trigger. Even as he touched it, the general sensed his danger and leaped back with the agility of an ape. But he was not quite quick enough; the dead tree, delicately adjusted to rest on the cut living one, crashed down and struck the general a glancing blow on the shoulder as it fell; but for his alertness, he must have been smashed beneath it. He staggered, but he did not fall; nor did he drop his revolver. He stood there, rubbing his injured shoulder, and Rainsford, with fear again gripping his heart, heard the general's mocking laugh ring through the jungle.

"Rainsford," called the general, "if you are within sound of my voice, as I suppose you are, let me congratulate you. Not many men know how to make a Malay man-catcher. Luckily, for me, I too have hunted in Malacca. You are proving interesting, Mr. Rainsford. I am going now to have my wound dressed; it's only a slight one. But I shall be back. I shall be back."

When the general, nursing his bruised shoulder, had gone, Rainsford took up his flight again. It was flight now, a desperate, hopeless flight, that carried him on for some hours. Dusk came, then darkness, and still he pressed on. The ground grew softer under his moccasins; the vegetation grew ranker, denser; insects bit him savagely. Then, as he stepped forward, his foot sank into the ooze. He tried to wrench it back, but the muck sucked viciously

at his foot as if it were a giant leech. With a violent effort, he tore his feet loose. He knew where he was now. Death Swamp and its quicksand.

His hands were tight closed as if his nerve were something tangible that someone in the darkness was trying to tear from his grip. The softness of the earth had given him an idea. He stepped back from the quicksand a dozen feet or so and, like some huge prehistoric beaver, he began to dig.

Rainsford had dug himself in in France when a second's delay meant death. That had been a placid pastime compared to his digging now. The pit grew deeper; when it was above his shoulders, he climbed out and from some hard saplings cut stakes and sharpened them to a fine point. These stakes he planted in the bottom of the pit with the points sticking up. With flying fingers he wove a rough carpet of weeds and branches and with it he covered the mouth of the pit. Then, wet with sweat and aching with tiredness, he crouched behind the stump of a lightning-charred tree.

He knew his pursuer was coming: he heard the padding sound of feet on the soft earth, and the night breeze brought him the perfume of the general's cigarette. It seemed to Rainsford that the general was coming with unusual swiftness; he was not feeling his way along, foot by foot. Rainsford, crouching there, could not see the general, nor could he see the pit. He lived a year in a minute. Then he felt an impulse to cry aloud with joy, for he heard the sharp crackle of the breaking branches as the cover of the pit gave way; he heard the sharp scream of pain as the pointed stakes found their mark. He leaped up from his place of concealment. Then he cowered back. Three feet from the pit a man was standing, with an electric torch in his hand.

"You've done well, Rainsford," the voice of the general called. "Your Burmese tiger pit has claimed one of my best dogs. Again you score. I think, Mr. Rainsford, I'll see what you can do against my whole pack. I'm going home for a rest now. Thank you for a most amusing evening."

At daybreak Rainsford, lying near the swamp, was awakened by a sound that made him know that he had new things to learn about

fear. It was a distant sound, faint and wavering, but he knew it. It was the baying of a pack of hounds.

Rainsford knew he could do one of two things. He could stay where he was and wait. That was suicide. He could flee. That was postponing the inevitable. For a moment he stood there, thinking. An idea that held a wild chance came to him, and, tightening his belt, he headed away from the swamp.

The baying of the hounds drew nearer, then still nearer, nearer, ever nearer. On a ridge Rainsford climbed a tree. Down a water-course, not a quarter of a mile away, he could see the bush moving. Straining his eyes, he saw the lean figure of General Zaroff; just ahead of him Rainsford made out another figure whose wide shoulders surged through the tall jungle weeds; it was the giant Ivan, and he seemed pulled forward by some unseen force; Rainsford knew that Ivan must be holding the pack in leash.

They would be on him any minute now. His mind worked frantically. He thought of a native trick he had learned in Uganda. He slid down the tree. He caught hold of a springy young sapling and to it he fastened his hunting knife, with the blade pointing down the trail; with a bit of wild grapevine he tied back the sapling. Then he ran for his life. The hounds raised their voices as they hit the fresh scent. Rainsford knew now how an animal at bay feels.

He had to stop to get his breath. The baying of the hounds stopped abruptly, and Rainsford's heart stopped too. They must have reached the knife.

He shinned excitedly up a tree and looked back. His pursuers had stopped. But the hope that was in Rainsford's brain when he climbed died, for he saw in the shallow valley that General Zaroff was still on his feet. But Ivan was not. The knife, driven by the recoil of the springing tree, had not wholly failed.

Rainsford had hardly tumbled to the ground when the pack took up the cry again.

"Nerve, nerve, nerve!" he panted, as he dashed along. A blue gap showed between the trees dead ahead. Ever nearer drew the hounds. Rainsford forced himself on toward that gap. He reached it. It was the shore of the sea. Across a cove he could

see the gloomy gray stone of the château. Twenty feet below him the sea rumbled and hissed. Rainsford hesitated. He heard the hounds. Then he leaped far out into the sea. . . .

When the general and his pack reached the place by the sea, the Cossack stopped. For some minutes he stood regarding the blue-green expanse of water. He shrugged his shoulders. Then he sat down, took a drink of brandy from a silver flask, lit a cigarette, and hummed a bit from "Madame Butterfly."

General Zaroff had an exceedingly good dinner in his great paneled dining hall that evening. With it he had a bottle of *Pol Roger* and half a bottle of *Chambertin*. Two slight annoyances kept him from perfect enjoyment. One was the thought that it would be difficult to replace Ivan; the other was that his quarry had escaped him; of course the American hadn't played the game—so thought the general as he tasted his after-dinner liqueur. In his library he read, to soothe himself, from the works of Marcus Aurelius. At ten he went up to his bedroom. He was deliciously tired, he said to himself, as he locked himself in. There was a little moonlight, so, before turning on his light, he went to the window and looked down at the courtyard. He could see the great hounds, and he called, "Better luck another time," to them. Then he switched on the light.

A man, who had been hiding in the curtains of the bed, was standing there.

"Rainsford!" screamed the general. "How in God's name did you get here?"

"Swam," said Rainsford. "I found it quicker than walking through the jungle."

The general sucked in his breath and smiled. "I congratulate you," he said. "You have won the game."

Rainsford did not smile. "I am still a beast at bay," he said, in a low, hoarse voice. "Get ready, General Zaroff."

The general made one of his deepest bows. "I see," he said. "Splendid! One of us is to furnish a repast for the hounds. The other will sleep in this very excellent bed. On guard, Rainsford." . . .

He had never slept in a better bed, Rainsford decided.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. To what extent did you experience the thrills of the "most dangerous game"? Look up the word *vicarious* and be able to explain how the reading of this story can be a *vicarious* adventure.

2. Make a list of the incidents in the actual plot after the two opposing forces are identified. Don't overlook the last line in the story! What do you think of this ending?

3. The *suspense* created by a plot depends upon two factors: (1) uncertainty as to which of the two opposing forces will win—or, at least, uncertainty concerning the means by which it will win; and (2) desire to see one opposing force (which we may call the *hero*) defeat the other (which we may call the *villain*). If we know which force is going to win and by what means, or if we do not have sufficient sympathy with one contender or the other to care which one wins, we find no suspense in the story.

In the light of these considerations, discuss the handling of suspense in "The Most Dangerous Game."

4. A story, no matter how far-fetched or impossible, must seem to the reader, momentarily at least, to be true. The quality of the story which gives it this necessary appearance of truth is called *verisimilitude*. Point out in "The Most Dangerous Game" details which give this highly improbable story verisimilitude. What purpose is served by the long introduction?

5. Explain General Zaroff's statement, "It is like finding a snuff-box in a limousine." What is meant by a mid-Victorian point of view?

6. Use the dictionary for: palpable, tangible, indolently, sensuous, staccato, palatial, château, mirage, gargoyle, astrakhan, bizarre, refectory, amenities, affable, quarry, quizzically, condone, blandly, opiate, ennui, hogshead, rowels, pungent, precariously, liqueur.

SOMETHING TO DO

As if you were going to write a story, write out the materials for a plot by listing the two opposing forces, the object of the struggle, and at least three incidents in the progress of the action. When you are through, you should have something like this:

PRELIMINARY SKETCH OF PLOT

Opposing forces—Richard, a freshman boy; Arlene, a freshman girl.

Object of the struggle—to make a sale of Christmas seals to wealthy Mr. Golden, who lives in their block.

Incidents—The teacher announces that there will be a contest between the boys and girls to see who can sell the greater number of Christmas seals, and suggests that they make contact with prospective large buyers as soon as possible.

An understanding look which is practically a challenge passes between Richard and Arlene.

Arlene tells the teacher that Richard has been writing on his desk, and the teacher asks Richard to report to her after school. Arlene grins triumphantly.

Richard persuades a friend of his to tell Arlene that a handsome senior wants to meet her near her locker fifteen minutes after the close of school.

When Richard is dismissed by his teacher, he goes by Arlene's locker to check up. The look on his face gives him away. Arlene bumps into him, spilling his books and papers on the floor. Then she races for the door.

FOR FURTHER READING: STORIES OF SUSPENSE

Wilkie Collins	A Terribly Strange Bed
Stephen Crane	The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky
Richard Harding Davis	Gallegher
Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach	Krambambuli
Thomas Hardy	The Three Strangers
O. Henry	A Municipal Report
Jack London	To Build a Fire
Edgar Allan Poe	The Pit and the Pendulum
John D. Swain	One Head Well Done

SURPRISE ENDING

IN MANY stories, a twist to the plot which adds greatly to our pleasure is the so-called *surprise ending*. As the term suggests, the surprise ending is a conclusion to the story different from the one the reader comes to expect as he reads. When you read a story with a surprise ending, you identify the hero and the villain, and follow the course of the struggle as it seems to approach an expected conclusion. But when the end of the story is reached, you are surprised to discover that your expectations have been wrong in some important particular: perhaps you mistook the villain for the hero (or the other way round); perhaps the two apparently opposing forces were really on the same side in the struggle; perhaps the side you thought was winning was really losing all the time.

Now the surprise ending, if it is a good one, will successfully pass three tests. The first test is that it should really surprise you. If you have foreseen the outcome, the surprise ending fails; no further test is necessary. The second test is that the ending should be properly prepared for, by hints of the true outcome planted along the way. In a story which contains these clues, when you go back and re-read the story, you will discover that the ending as written is consistent with the facts—that it is the ending you would have foreseen, if you had been alert enough. If the ending is completely unprepared for, you have a right to be resentful; the author has not played fair with you, and fails the second test. Any author can make a story point to one ending, and then in the last paragraph say, "April fool! It wasn't that way at all!" But the master of the surprise ending somehow manages to make you expect a wrong ending, while actually moving on toward the right one, and at the end is able to say, in effect, "Why were you surprised? I've been telling you all the time that the story was going to end this way!"

Now the "somehow"—the details and hints—by which the au-

thor manages to make you expect a wrong ending are false clues that lead away from the true ending—"red herrings," we call them. The third test of a good surprise ending says that these false clues, while their effect is to mislead you, should also serve some other purpose in the story. If, for instance, they reveal character, or make the setting more vivid, or contribute to verisimilitude, you must not resent them. You must admit that even with his red herrings the author played fair, and that his story passes the third test. But do not expect too much. This third test is a very severe one; only the very finest surprise ending stories can pass it.

To devise a surprise ending which plays fair with the reader and at the same time surprises him requires expert craftsmanship; and doubtless a part of our pleasure in a genuine surprise ending is our admiration for the skill of the writer.

SUSPICION

Dorothy L. Sayers

The following story has two strikes against it from the very start, in the fact that you are expecting a surprise ending. But even with this handicap, it may turn out to be successful. For Miss Sayers, who is famed as the author of detective stories both long and short, has here contrived a surprise-ending story which has seldom been excelled.

As THE atmosphere of the railway carriage thickened with tobacco-smoke, Mr. Mummery became increasingly aware that his breakfast had not agreed with him.

There could have been nothing wrong with the breakfast itself. Brown bread, rich in vitamin-content, as advised by the *Morning Star's* health expert; bacon fried to a delicious crispness; eggs just nicely set; coffee made as only Mrs. Sutton knew how to make it. Mrs. Sutton had been a real find, and that was something to be thankful for. For Ethel, since her nervous breakdown in the summer, had really not been fit to wrestle with the untrained girls who had come and gone in tempestuous succession. It took very little to upset Ethel nowadays, poor child. Mr. Mummery, trying hard to ignore his growing internal discomfort, hoped he was not in for an illness. Apart from the trouble it would cause at the office, it would worry Ethel terribly, and Mr. Mummery would cheerfully have laid down his rather uninteresting little life to spare Ethel a moment's uneasiness.

He slipped a digestive tablet into his mouth—he had taken lately to carrying a few tablets about with him—and opened his paper. There did not seem to be very much news. A question

had been asked in the House¹ about Government typewriters. The Prince of Wales had smilingly opened an all-British exhibition of footwear. A further split had occurred in the Liberal party. The police were still looking for the woman who was supposed to have poisoned a family in Lincoln. Two girls had been trapped in a burning factory. A film-star had obtained her fourth decree nisi.²

At Paragon Station, Mr. Mummery descended and took a tram. The internal discomfort was taking the form of a definite nausea. Happily he contrived to reach his office before the worst occurred. He was seated at his desk, pale but in control of himself, when his partner came breezing in.

"'Morning, Mummery," said Mr. Brookes in his loud tones, adding inevitably, "Cold enough for you?"

"Quite," replied Mr. Mummery. "Unpleasantly raw, in fact."

"Beastly, beastly," said Mr. Brookes. "Your bulbs all in?"

"Not quite all," confessed Mr. Mummery. "As a matter of fact I haven't been feeling—"

"Pity," interrupted his partner. "Great pity. Ought to get 'em in early. Mine were in last week. My little place will be a picture in the spring. For a town garden, that is. You're lucky, living in the country. Find it better than Hull, I expect, eh? Though we get plenty of fresh air up in the Avenues. How's the missus?"

"Thank you, she's very much better."

"Glad to hear that, very glad. Hope we shall have her about again this winter as usual. Can't do without her in the Drama Society, you know. By Jove! I shan't forget her acting last year in *Romance*. She and young Welbeck positively brought the house down, didn't they? The Welbecks were asking after her only yesterday."

"Thank you, yes. I hope she will soon be able to take up her social activities again. But the doctor says she mustn't overdo it.

¹ **House:** House of Commons, the section of Parliament comparable to our House of Representatives

² **decree nisi:** conditional decree of divorce

No worry, he says—that's the important thing. She is to go easy and not rush about or undertake too much."

"Quite right, quite right. Worry's the devil and all. I cut out worrying years ago and look at me! Fit as a fiddle, for all I shan't see fifty again. You're not looking altogether the thing, by the way."

"A touch of dyspepsia," said Mr. Mummery. "Nothing much. Chill on the liver, that's what I put it down to."

"That's what it is," said Mr. Brookes, seizing his opportunity. "Is life worth living? It depends upon the liver. Ha, ha! Well now, well now—we must do a spot of work, I suppose. Where's that lease of Ferraby's?"

Mr. Mummery, who did not feel at his conversational best that morning, rather welcomed this suggestion, and for half an hour was allowed to proceed in peace with the duties of an estate agent. Presently, however, Mr. Brookes burst into speech again.

"By the way," he said abruptly, "I suppose your wife doesn't know of a good cook, does she?"

"Well, no," replied Mr. Mummery. "They aren't so easy to find nowadays. In fact, we've only just got suited ourselves. But why? Surely your old Cookie isn't leaving you?"

"Good lord, no!" Mr. Brookes laughed heartily. "It would take an earthquake to shake off old Cookie. No. It's for the Philipsons. Their girl's getting married. That's the worst of girls. I said to Philipson, 'You mind what you're doing,' I said. 'Get somebody you know something about, or you may find yourself landed with this poisoning woman—what's her name—Andrews. Don't want to be sending wreaths to your funeral yet awhile,' I said. He laughed, but it's no laughing matter and so I told him. What we pay the police for I simply don't know. Nearly a month now, and they can't seem to lay hands on the woman. All they say is, they think she's hanging about the neighborhood and 'may seek a situation as cook.' As cook! Now I ask you!"

"You don't think she committed suicide, then?" suggested Mr. Mummery.

"Suicide my foot!" retorted Mr. Brookes coarsely. "Don't you

believe it, my boy. That coat found in the river was all eyewash. They don't commit suicide, that sort don't."

"What sort?"

"Those arsenic-maniacs. They're too damned careful of their own skins. Cunning as weasels, that's what they are. It's only to be hoped they'll manage to catch her before she tries her hand on anybody else. As I told Philipson—"

"You think Mrs. Andrews did it, then?"

"Did it? Of course she did it. It's plain as the nose on your face. Looked after her old father, and he died suddenly—left her a bit of money, too. Then she keeps house for an elderly gentleman, and he dies suddenly. Now there's this husband and wife—man dies and woman taken very ill, of arsenic poisoning. Cook runs away, and you ask, did she do it? I don't mind betting that when they dig up the father and the other old bird they'll find them bung-full of arsenic, too. Once that sort gets started, they don't stop. Grows on 'em, as you might say."

"I suppose it does," said Mr. Mummery. He picked up his paper again and studied the photograph of the missing woman. "She looks harmless enough," he remarked. "Rather a nice, motherly-looking kind of woman."

"She's got a bad mouth," pronounced Mr. Brookes. He had a theory that character showed in the mouth. "I wouldn't trust that woman an inch."

As the day went on, Mr. Mummery felt better. He was rather nervous about his lunch, choosing carefully a little boiled fish and custard pudding and being particular not to rush about immediately after the meal. To his great relief, the fish and custard remained where they were put, and he was not visited by that tiresome pain which had become almost habitual in the last fortnight. By the end of the day he became quite light-hearted. The bogey of illness and doctor's bills ceased to haunt him. He bought a bunch of bronze chrysanthemums to carry home to Ethel, and it was with a feeling of pleasant anticipation that he left the train and walked up the garden path of Mon Abri.

He was a little dashed by not finding his wife in the sitting-room.

Still clutching the bunch of chrysanthemums he pattered down the passage and pushed open the kitchen-door.

Nobody was there but the cook. She was sitting at the table with her back to him, and started up almost guiltily as he approached.

"Lor', sir," she said, "you give me quite a start. I didn't hear the front door go."

"Where is Mrs. Mummery? Not feeling bad again, is she?"

"Well, sir, she's got a bit of a headache, poor lamb. I made her lay down and took her up a nice cup o' tea at half-past four. I think she's dozing nicely now."

"Dear, dear," said Mr. Mummery.

"It was turning out the dining-room done it, if you ask me," said Mrs. Sutton. "'Now, don't you overdo yourself, ma'am,' I says to her, but you know how she is, sir. She gets that restless, she can't abear to be doing nothing."

"I know," said Mr. Mummery. "It's not your fault, Mrs. Sutton. I'm sure you look after us both admirably. I'll just run up and have a peep at her. I won't disturb her if she's asleep. By the way, what are we having for dinner?"

"Well, I had made a nice steak-and-kidney pie," said Mrs. Sutton, in accents suggesting that she would readily turn it into a pumpkin or a coach-and-four if it was not approved of.

"Oh!" said Mr. Mummery. "Pastry? Well, I—"

"You'll find it beautiful and light," protested the cook, whisking open the oven-door for Mr. Mummery to see. "And it's made with butter, sir, you having said that you found lard indigestible."

"Thank you, thank you," said Mr. Mummery. "I'm sure it will be most excellent. I haven't been feeling altogether the thing just lately, and lard does not seem to suit me nowadays."

"Well, it don't suit some people, and that's a fact," agreed Mrs. Sutton. "I shouldn't wonder if you've got a bit of a chill on the liver. I'm sure this weather is enough to upset anybody."

She bustled to the table and cleared away the picture-paper which she had been reading.

"Perhaps the mistress would like her dinner sent up to her?" she suggested.

Mr. Mummery said he would go and see, and tiptoed his way upstairs. Ethel was lying snuggled under the eiderdown and looked very small and fragile in the big double bed. She stirred as he came in and smiled up at him.

"Hullo, darling!" said Mr. Mummery.

"Hullo! You back? I must have been asleep. I got tired and headachy, and Mrs. Sutton packed me off upstairs."

"You've been doing too much, sweetheart," said her husband, taking her hand in his and sitting down on the edge of the bed.

"Yes—it was naughty of me. What lovely flowers, Harold. All for me?"

"All for you, Tiddley-winks," said Mr. Mummery tenderly. "Don't I deserve something for that?"

Mrs. Mummery smiled, and Mr. Mummery took his reward several times over.

"That's quite enough, you sentimental old thing," said Mrs. Mummery. "Run away, now, I'm going to get up."

"Much better go to bed, my precious, and let Mrs. Sutton send your dinner up," said her husband.

Ethel protested, but he was firm with her. If she didn't take care of herself, she wouldn't be allowed to go to the Drama Society meetings. And everybody was so anxious to have her back. The Welbecks had been asking after her and saying that they really couldn't get on without her.

"Did they?" said Ethel with some animation. "It's very sweet of them to want me. Well, perhaps I'll go to bed after all. And how has my old Hubby been all day?"

"Not too bad, not too bad."

"No more tummy-aches?"

"Well, just a *little* tummy-ache. But it's quite gone now. Nothing for Tiddley-winks to worry about."

Mr. Mummery experienced no more distressing symptoms the next day or the next. Following the advice of the newspaper expert, he took to drinking orange-juice, and was delighted with the results of the treatment. On Thursday, however, he was taken so ill in the night that Ethel was alarmed and insisted on

sending for the doctor. The doctor felt his pulse and looked at his tongue and appeared to take the matter lightly. An inquiry into what he had been eating elicited the fact that dinner had consisted of pig's trotters, followed by a milk pudding, and that, before retiring, Mr. Mummery had consumed a large glass of orange-juice, according to his new régime.

"There's your trouble," said Dr. Griffith cheerfully. "Orange-juice is an excellent thing, and so are trotters, but not in combination. Pig and oranges together are extraordinarily bad for the liver. I don't know why they should be, but there's no doubt that they are. Now I'll send you round a little prescription and you stick to slops³ for a day or two and keep off pork. And don't you worry about him, Mrs. Mummery, he's as sound as a trout. You're the one we've got to look after. I don't want to see those black rings under the eyes, you know. Disturbed night, of course—yes. Taking your tonic regularly? That's right. Well, don't be alarmed about your hubby. We'll soon have him out and about again."

The prophecy was fulfilled, but not immediately. Mr. Mummery, though confining his diet to Benger's food, bread-and-milk and beef-tea skilfully prepared by Mrs. Sutton and brought to his bedside by Ethel, remained very seedy all through Friday, and was only able to stagger rather shakily downstairs on Saturday afternoon. He had evidently suffered a "thorough upset." However, he was able to attend to a few papers which Brookes had sent down from the office for his signature, and to deal with the household books. Ethel was not a business woman, and Mr. Mummery always ran over the accounts with her. Having settled up with the butcher, the baker, the dairy and the coal-merchant, Mr. Mummery looked up inquiringly.

"Anything more, darling?"

"Well, there's Mrs. Sutton. This is the end of her month, you know."

"So it is. Well, you're quite satisfied with her, aren't you, darling?"

"Yes, rather—aren't you? She's a good cook, and a sweet,

³ slops: thin, tasteless liquid food

motherly old thing, too. Don't you think it was a real brainwave of mine, engaging her like that, on the spot?"

"I do, indeed," said Mr. Mummery.

"It was a perfect providence, her turning up like that, just after that wretched Jane had gone off without even giving notice. I was in absolute despair. It was a little bit of a gamble, of course, taking her without any references, but naturally, if she'd been looking after a widowed mother, you couldn't expect her to give references."

"N-no," said Mr. Mummery. At the time he had felt uneasy about the matter, though he had not liked to say much, because, of course, they simply had to have somebody. And the experiment had justified itself so triumphantly in practice that one couldn't say much about it now. He had once rather tentatively suggested writing to the clergyman of Mrs. Sutton's parish but, as Ethel had said, the clergyman wouldn't have been able to tell them anything about cooking, and cooking, after all, was the chief point.

Mr. Mummery counted out the month's money.

"And by the way, my dear," he said, "you might just mention to Mrs. Sutton that if she must read the morning paper before I come down, I should be obliged if she would fold it neatly afterwards."

"What an old fuss-box you are, darling," said his wife.

Mr. Mummery sighed. He could not explain that it was somehow important that the morning paper should come to him fresh and prim. Women did not feel these things.

On Sunday, Mr. Mummery felt very much better—quite his old self, in fact. He enjoyed the *News of the World* over breakfast in bed, reading the murders rather carefully. Mr. Mummery got quite a lot of pleasure out of murders—they gave him an agreeable thrill of vicarious adventure, for, naturally, they were matters quite remote from daily life in the outskirts of Hull.

He noticed that Brookes had been perfectly right. Mrs. Andrews' father and former employer had been "dug up" and had, indeed, proved to be "bung-full" of arsenic.

He came downstairs for dinner—roast sirloin, with the potatoes done under the meat and Yorkshire pudding of delicious lightness, and an apple tart to follow. After three days of invalid diet, it was

delightful to savor the crisp fat and underdone lean. He ate moderately, but with a sensuous enjoyment. Ethel, on the other hand, seemed a little lacking in appetite, but then, she had never been a great meat-eater. She was fastidious and, besides, she was (quite unnecessarily) afraid of getting fat.

It was a fine afternoon, and at three o'clock, when he was quite certain that the roast beef was "settling" properly, it occurred to Mr. Mummery that it would be a good thing to put the rest of those bulbs in. He slipped on his old gardening-coat and wandered out to the potting-shed. Here he picked up a bag of tulips and a trowel, and then, remembering that he was wearing his good trousers, decided that it would be wise to take a mat to kneel on. When had he had the mat last? He could not recollect, but he rather fancied he had put it away in the corner under the potting-shelf. Stooping down, he felt about in the dark among the flower-pots. Yes, there it was, but there was a tin of something in the way. He lifted the tin carefully out. Of course, yes—the remains of the weed-killer.

Mr. Mummery glanced at the pink label, printed in staring letters with the legend: "ARSENICAL WEED-KILLER. POISON," and observed, with a mild feeling of excitement, that it was the same brand of stuff that had been associated with Mrs. Andrews' latest victim. He was rather pleased about it. It gave him a sensation of being remotely but definitely in touch with important events. Then he noticed, with surprise and a little annoyance, that the stopper had been put in quite loosely.

"However'd I come to leave it like that?" he grunted. "Shouldn't wonder if all the goodness has gone off." He removed the stopper and squinted into the can, which appeared to be half-full. Then he rammed the thing home again, giving it a sharp thump with the handle of the trowel for better security. After that he washed his hands carefully at the scullery tap, for he did not believe in taking risks.

He was a trifle disconcerted, when he came in after planting the tulips, to find visitors in the sitting-room. He was always pleased to see Mrs. Welbeck and her son, but he would rather have had warning, so that he could have scrubbed the garden-mold out of

his nails more thoroughly. Not that Mrs. Welbeck appeared to notice. She was a talkative woman and paid little attention to anything but her own conversation. Much to Mr. Mummery's annoyance, she chose to prattle about the Lincoln Poisoning Case. A most unsuitable subject for the tea-table, thought Mr. Mummery, at the best of times. His own "upset" was vivid enough in his memory to make him queasy over the discussion of medical symptoms, and besides, this kind of talk was not good for Ethel. After all, the poisoner was still supposed to be in the neighborhood. It was enough to make even a strong-nerved woman uneasy. A glance at Ethel showed him that she was looking quite white and tremulous. He must stop Mrs. Welbeck somehow, or there would be a repetition of one of the old, dreadful, hysterical scenes.

He broke into the conversation with violent abruptness.

"Those Forsyth cuttings, Mrs. Welbeck," he said. "Now is just about the time to take them. If you care to come down the garden I will get them for you."

He saw a relieved glance pass between Ethel and young Welbeck. Evidently the boy understood the situation and was chafing at his mother's tactlessness. Mrs. Welbeck, brought up all standing, gasped slightly and then veered off with obliging readiness on the new tack. She accompanied her host down the garden and chattered cheerfully about horticulture while he selected and trimmed the cuttings. She complimented Mr. Mummery on the immaculacy of his gravel paths. "I simply cannot keep the weeds down," she said.

Mr. Mummery mentioned the weed-killer and praised its efficacy.

"That stuff!" Mrs. Welbeck stared at him. Then she shuddered. "I wouldn't have it in my place for a thousand pounds," she said, with emphasis.

Mr. Mummery smiled. "Oh, we keep it well away from the house," he said. "Even if I were a careless sort of person—"

He broke off. The recollection of the loosened stopper had come to him suddenly, and it was as though, deep down in his mind, some obscure assembling of ideas had taken place. He left

it at that, and went into the kitchen to fetch a newspaper to wrap up the cuttings.

Their approach to the house had evidently been seen from the sitting-room window, for when they entered, young Welbeck was already on his feet and holding Ethel's hand in the act of saying good-bye. He maneuvered his mother out of the house with tactful promptness and Mr. Mummery returned to the kitchen to clear up the newspapers he had fished out of the drawer. To clear them up and to examine them more closely. Something had struck him about them, which he wanted to verify. He turned them over very carefully, sheet by sheet. Yes—he had been right. Every portrait of Mrs. Andrews, every paragraph and line about the Lincoln Poisoning Case, had been carefully cut out.

Mr. Mummery sat down by the kitchen fire. He felt as though he needed warmth. There seemed to be a curious cold lump of something at the pit of his stomach—something that he was chary of investigating.

He tried to recall the appearance of Mrs. Andrews as shown in the newspaper photographs, but he had not a good visual memory. He remembered having remarked to Brookes that it was a "motherly" face. Then he tried counting up the time since the disappearance. Nearly a month, Brookes had said—and that was a week ago. Must be over a month now. A month. He had just paid Mrs. Sutton her month's money.

"Ethel!" was the thought that hammered at the door of his brain. At all costs, he must cope with this monstrous suspicion on his own. He must spare her any shock or anxiety. And he must be sure of his ground. To dismiss the only decent cook they had ever had out of sheer, unfounded panic, would be wanton cruelty to both women. If he did it at all, it would have to be done arbitrarily, preposterously—he could not suggest horrors to Ethel. However it was done, there would be trouble. Ethel would not understand and he dared not tell her.

But if by any chance there was anything in this ghastly doubt—how could he expose Ethel to the appalling danger of having the woman in the house a moment longer? He thought of the family

at Lincoln—the husband dead, the wife escaped by a miracle with her life. Was not any shock, any risk, better than that?

Mr. Mummery felt suddenly very lonely and tired. His illness had taken it out of him.

Those illnesses—they had begun, when? Three weeks ago he had had the first attack. Yes, but then he had always been rather subject to gastric troubles. Bilious attacks. Not so violent, perhaps, as these last, but undoubted bilious attacks.

He pulled himself together and went, rather heavily, into the sitting-room. Ethel was tucked up in a corner of the chesterfield.

"Tired, darling?"

"Yes, a little."

"That woman has worn you out with talking. She oughtn't to talk so much."

"No." Her head shifted wearily in the cushions. "All about that horrible case. I don't like hearing about such things."

"Of course not. Still, when a thing like that happens in the neighborhood, people will gossip and talk. It would be a relief if they caught the woman. One doesn't like to think—"

"I don't want to think of anything so hateful. She must be a horrible creature."

"Horrible. Brookes was saying the other day—"

"I don't want to hear what he said. I don't want to hear about it at all. I want to be quiet. I want to be quiet!"

He recognized the note of rising hysteria.

"Tiddley-winks shall be quiet. Don't worry, darling. We won't talk about horrors."

No. It would not do to talk about them.

Ethel went to bed early. It was understood that on Sundays Mr. Mummery should sit up till Mrs. Sutton came in. Ethel was a little anxious about this, but he assured her that he felt quite strong enough. In body, indeed, he did; it was his mind that felt weak and confused. He had decided to make a casual remark about the mutilated newspapers—just to see what Mrs. Sutton would say.

He allowed himself the usual indulgence of a whisky-and-soda

as he sat waiting. At a quarter to ten he heard the familiar click of the garden gate. Footsteps passed up the gravel—squeak, squeak, to the back door. Then the sound of the latch, the shutting of the door, the rattle of the bolts being shot home. Then a pause. Mrs. Sutton would be taking off her hat. The moment was coming.

The step sounded in the passage. The door opened. Mrs. Sutton in her neat black dress stood on the threshold. He was aware of a reluctance to face her. Then he looked up. A plump-faced woman, her eyes obscured by thick horn-rimmed spectacles. Was there, perhaps, something hard about the mouth? Or was it just that she had lost most of her front teeth?

"Would you be requiring anything tonight, sir, before I go up?"

"No, thank you, Mrs. Sutton."

"I hope you are feeling better, sir." Her eager interest in his health seemed to him almost sinister, but the eyes, behind the thick glasses, were inscrutable.

"Quite better, thank you, Mrs. Sutton."

"Mrs. Mummery is not indisposed, is she, sir? Should I take her up a glass of hot milk or anything?"

"No, thank you, no." He spoke hurriedly, and fancied that she looked disappointed.

"Very well, sir. Good night, sir."

"Good night. Oh! by the way, Mrs. Sutton—"

"Yes, sir?"

"Oh, nothing," said Mr Mummery, "nothing."

Next morning Mr. Mummery opened his paper eagerly. He would have been glad to learn that an arrest had been made over the week-end. But there was no news for him. The chairman of a trust company had blown out his brains, and the headlines were all occupied with tales about lost millions and ruined shareholders. Both in his own paper and in those he purchased on the way to the office, the Lincoln Poisoning Tragedy had been relegated to an obscure paragraph on a back page, which informed him that the police were still baffled.

The next few days were the most uncomfortable that Mr.

Mummery had ever spent. He developed a habit of coming down early in the morning and prowling about the kitchen. This made Ethel nervous, but Mrs. Sutton offered no remark. She watched him tolerantly, even, he thought, with something like amusement. After all, it was ridiculous. What was the use of supervising the breakfast, when he had to be out of the house every day between half-past nine and six?

At the office, Brookes rallied him on the frequency with which he rang up Ethel. Mr. Mummery paid no attention. It was reassuring to hear her voice and to know that she was safe and well.

Nothing happened, and by the following Thursday he began to think that he had been a fool. He came home late that night. Brookes had persuaded him to go with him to a little bachelor dinner for a friend who was about to get married. He left the others at eleven o'clock, however, refusing to make a night of it. The household was in bed when he got back but a note from Mrs. Sutton lay on the table, informing him that there was cocoa for him in the kitchen, ready for hotting-up. He hotted it up accordingly in the little saucepan where it stood. There was just one good cupful.

He sipped it thoughtfully, standing by the kitchen stove. After the first sip, he put the cup down. Was it his fancy, or was there something queer about the taste? He sipped it again, rolling it upon his tongue. It seemed to him to have a faint tang, metallic and unpleasant. In a sudden dread he ran out to the scullery and spat the mouthful into the sink.

After this, he stood quite still for a moment or two. Then, with a curious deliberation, as though his movements had been dictated to him, he fetched an empty medicine-bottle from the pantry-shelf, rinsed it under the tap and tipped the contents of the cup carefully into it. He slipped the bottle into his coat pocket and moved on tip-toe to the back door. The bolts were difficult to draw without noise, but he managed it at last. Still on tip-toe, he stole across the garden to the potting-shed. Stooping down, he struck a match. He knew exactly where he had left the tin of weed-killer, under the shelf behind the pots at the back. Cautiously he lifted it out. The match flared up and burnt his fingers, but before he could light

another his sense of touch had told him what he wanted to know. The stopper was loose again.

Panic seized Mr. Mummery, standing there in the earthy-smelling shed, in his dress-suit and overcoat, holding the tin in one hand, the match-box in the other. He wanted very badly to run and tell somebody what he had discovered.

Instead, he replaced the tin exactly where he had found it and went back to the house. As he crossed the garden again, he noticed a light in Mrs. Sutton's bedroom window. This terrified him more than anything which had gone before. Was she watching him? Ethel's window was dark. If she had drunk anything deadly there would be lights everywhere, movements, calls for the doctor, just as when he himself had been attacked. Attacked—that was the right word, he thought.

Still with the same odd presence of mind and precision, he went in, washed out the utensils, and made a second brew of cocoa, which he left standing in the saucepan. He crept quietly to his bedroom. Ethel's voice greeted him on the threshold.

"How late you are, Harold. Naughty old boy! Have a good time?"

"Not bad. You all right, darling?"

"Quite all right. Did Mrs. Sutton leave something hot for you? She said she would."

"Yes, but I wasn't thirsty."

Ethel laughed. "Oh! it was that sort of party, was it?"

Mr. Mummery did not attempt any denials. He undressed and got into bed and clutched his wife to him as though defying death and hell to take her from him. Next morning he would act. He thanked God that he was not too late.

Mr. Dimthorpe, the chemist, was a great friend of Mr. Mummery's. They had often sat together in the untidy little shop on Spring Bank and exchanged views on green-fly and club-root. Mr. Mummery told his story frankly to Mr. Dimthorpe and handed over the bottle of cocoa. Mr. Dimthorpe congratulated him on his prudence and intelligence.

"I will have it ready for you by this evening," he said, "and if

it's what you think it is, then we shall have a clear case on which to take action "

Mr. Mummery thanked him, and was extremely vague and inattentive at business all day. But that hardly mattered, for Mr Brookes, who had seen the party through to a riotous end in the small hours, was in no very observant mood. At half-past four, Mr. Mummery shut up his desk decisively and announced that he was off early, he had a call to make.

Mr. Dimthorpe was ready for him.

"No doubt about it," he said. "I used Marsh's test. It's a heavy dose—no wonder you tasted it. There must be four or five grains of pure arsenic in that bottle. Look, here's the mirror. You can see it for yourself."

Mr. Mummery gazed at the little glass tube with its ominous purple-black stain.

"Will you ring up the police from here?" asked the chemist.

"No," said Mr. Mummery. "No—I want to get home. God knows what's happening there. And I've only just time to catch my train."

"All right," said Mr. Dimthorpe. "Leave it to me. I'll ring them up for you."

The local train did not go fast enough for Mr. Mummery. Ethel — poisoned — dying — dead — Ethel — poisoned — dying — dead — the wheels drummed in his ears. He almost ran out of the station and along the road. A car was standing at his door. He saw it from the end of the street and broke into a gallop. It had happened already. The doctor was there. Fool, murderer that he was to have left things so late.

Then, while he was still a hundred and fifty yards off, he saw the front door open. A man came out followed by Ethel herself. The visitor got into his car and was driven away. Ethel went in again. She was safe—safe!

He could hardly control himself to hang up his hat and coat and go in looking reasonably calm. His wife had returned to the arm-chair by the fire and greeted him in some surprise. There were tea-things on the table.

"Back early, aren't you?"

"Yes—business was slack. Somebody been to tea?"

"Yes, young Welbeck. About the arrangements for the Drama Society." She spoke briefly but with an undertone of excitement.

A qualm came over Mr. Mummery. Would a guest be any protection? His face must have shown his feelings, for Ethel stared at him in amazement.

"What's the matter, Harold? You look so queer."

"Darling," said Mr. Mummery, "there's something I want to tell you about." He sat down and took her hand in his. "Something a little unpleasant, I'm afraid—"

"Oh, ma'am!"

The cook was in the doorway.

"I beg your pardon, sir— I didn't know you was in. Will you be taking tea or can I clear away? And, oh, ma'am, there was a young man at the fishmonger's and he's just come from Grimsby and they've caught that dreadful woman—that Mrs. Andrews. Isn't it a good thing? It's worried me dreadful to think she was going about like that, but they've caught her. Taken a job as housekeeper she had to two elderly ladies and they found the wicked poison on her. Girl as spotted her will get a reward. I been keeping my eyes open for her, but it's at Grimsby she was all the time."

Mr. Mummery clutched at the arm of his chair. It had all been a mad mistake then. He wanted to shout or cry. He wanted to apologize to this foolish, pleasant, excited woman. All a mistake.

But there had been the cocoa. Mr. Dimthorpe. Marsh's test. Five grains of arsenic. Who, then—?

He glanced around at his wife, and in her eyes he saw something that he had never seen before. . . .

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. The first test of a good surprise ending: Did the ending surprise you? If not, at what point in the story did you begin to suspect the truth? Why did you want to read on?

2. The second test: What hints of the truth did the author plant along the way? Why did you miss them? Did you overlook them, or misinterpret them?

3. The third test What details kept suggesting the wrong idea to you? Do any of these appear to be unfair? Try to show that they do something more in the story than merely mislead the reader.

4. How did you like the ending? What will happen to Mrs. Mummery?

5. Use the dictionary for: tempestuous, nausea, dyspepsia, elicited, vicarious, sensuous, chary, wanton, preposterously, arbitrarily, bilious, relegated, inscrutable, sinister, scullery, rallied, qualm.

SOMETHING TO DO

This is a good story to work out in the form of a radio play. Through class discussion, plan the radio script far enough to know how many scenes you would have, and what would happen in each scene. Determine also what sound effects would be included.

Perhaps, after this discussion, several pupils will volunteer to write out the individual scenes, and present the finished play before the class.

FOR FURTHER READING: STORIES WITH SURPRISE ENDINGS

Thomas Bailey Aldrich	Marjorie Daw
Frederick S. Buckley	Gold-Mounted Guns
John Collier	Back for Christmas
Henry Sydnor Harrison	Miss Hinch
Washington Irving	The Stout Gentleman
Guy de Maupassant	The Necklace
"Saki" (H. H. Munro)	Dusk
	The Open Window
Frank Richard Stockton	The Discourager of Hesitancy
	The Lady, or the Tiger?

DETECTIVE STORY

IN MANY people's minds, mystery stories, crime stories, and detective stories are all mixed up together. The true *detective story* is comparable to the solving of a puzzle: it opens with the crime, and the main part of the story is the explanation of the means by which the crime is solved and the criminal discovered. Edgar Allan Poe, who invented the detective story in 1841, called it a tale of "ratiocination," which means "reasoning." He meant that it is a story of reasoning, of mental processes that move from clues to conclusions. Ellery Queen, a modern American master of the detective story, calls it a "story of pure detection."

Like the surprise-ending story, the true detective story is a little game played by the author with the reader. The detective gathers certain information and then says, "Now I know the criminal." At this point the reader is expected still to be puzzled and to say to himself, "Who can it be?" Then the detective explains, and the reader somewhat sheepishly admits that he should have been able to solve the problem himself from the evidence. But if in the explanation the detective presents new evidence, which the author has not hitherto revealed to the reader, then the reader has a right to be indignant, and to accuse the author of cheating. The great detective stories are those in which the author plays fair with the reader and yet manages to keep him puzzled right up to the final announcement of the identity of the criminal.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE THREE STUDENTS

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

The most famous detective in all literature is of course Sherlock Holmes. The following story shows him at work. Although the problem that faces him here is a comparatively simple one, I think you will enjoy following his mental processes as he attacks it.

IT WAS in the year '95 that a combination of events, into which I need not enter, caused Mr. Sherlock Holmes and myself to spend some weeks in one of our great university towns, and it was during this time that the small but instructive adventure which I am about to relate befell us. It will be obvious that any details which would help the reader exactly to identify the college or the criminal would be injudicious and offensive. So painful a scandal may well be allowed to die out. With due discretion the incident itself may, however, be described, since it serves to illustrate some of those qualities for which my friend was remarkable. I will endeavor, in my statement, to avoid such terms as would serve to limit the events to any particular place, or give a clue as to the people concerned.

We were residing at the time in furnished lodgings close to a library where Sherlock Holmes was pursuing some laborious researches in early English charters—researches which led to results so striking that they may be the subject of one of my future narratives. Here it was that one evening we received a visit from an acquaintance, Mr. Hilton Soames, tutor and lecturer at the College of St. Luke's. Mr. Soames was a tall, spare man, of a nervous and excitable temperament. I had always known him to be restless in

his manner, but on this particular occasion he was in such a state of uncontrollable agitation that it was clear something very unusual had occurred.

"I trust, Mr. Holmes, that you can spare me a few hours of your valuable time. We have had a very painful incident at St. Luke's, and really, but for the happy chance of your being in town, I should have been at a loss what to do."

"I am very busy just now, and I desire no distractions," my friend answered. "I should much prefer that you called in the aid of the police."

"No, no, my dear sir; such a course is utterly impossible. When once the law is evoked it cannot be stayed again, and this is just one of those cases where, for the credit of the college, it is most essential to avoid scandal. Your discretion is as well known as your powers, and you are the one man in the world who can help me. I beg you, Mr. Holmes, to do what you can."

My friend's temper had not improved since he had been deprived of the congenial surroundings of Baker Street. Without his scrapbooks, his chemicals, and his homely untidiness, he was an uncomfortable man. He shrugged his shoulders in ungracious acquiescence, while our visitor in hurried words and with much excitable gesticulation poured forth his story.

"I must explain to you, Mr. Holmes, that tomorrow is the first day of the examination for the Fortescue Scholarship. I am one of the examiners. My subject is Greek, and the first of the papers consists of a large passage of Greek translation which the candidate has not seen. This passage is printed on the examination paper, and it would naturally be an immense advantage if the candidate could prepare it in advance. For this reason, great care is taken to keep the paper secret.

"Today, about three o'clock, the proofs of this paper arrived from the printers. The exercise consists of half a chapter of Thucydides. I had to read it over carefully, as the text must be absolutely correct. At four-thirty my task was not yet completed. I had, however, promised to take tea in a friend's rooms, so I left the proof upon my desk. I was absent rather more than an hour.

"You are aware, Mr. Holmes, that our college doors are double

—a green baize one within and a heavy oak one without. As I approached my outer door, I was amazed to see a key in it. For an instant I imagined that I had left my own there, but on feeling in my pocket I found that it was all right. The only duplicate which existed, so far as I knew, was that which belonged to my servant, Bannister—a man who has looked after my room for ten years, and whose honesty is absolutely above suspicion. I found that the key was indeed his, that he had entered my room to know if I wanted tea, and that he had very carelessly left the key in the door when he came out. His visit to my room must have been within a very few minutes of my leaving it. His forgetfulness about the key would have mattered little upon any other occasion, but on this one day it has produced the most deplorable consequences.

“The moment I looked at my table, I was aware that someone had rummaged among my papers. The proof was in three long slips. I had left them all together. Now, I found that one of them was lying on the floor, one was on the side table near the window, and the third was where I had left it.”

Holmes stirred for the first time.

“The first page on the floor, the second in the window, the third where you left it,” said he.

“Exactly, Mr. Holmes. You amaze me. How could you possibly know that?”

“Pray continue your very interesting statement.”

“For an instant I imagined that Bannister had taken the unpardonable liberty of examining my papers. He denied it, however, with the utmost earnestness, and I am convinced that he was speaking the truth. The alternative was that someone passing had observed the key in the door, had known that I was out, and had entered to look at the papers. A large sum of money is at stake, for the scholarship is a very valuable one, and an unscrupulous man might very well run a risk in order to gain an advantage over his fellows.

“Bannister was very much upset by the incident. He had nearly fainted when we found that the papers had undoubtedly been tampered with. I gave him a little brandy and left him collapsed in a chair, while I made a most careful examination of the

room. I soon saw that the intruder had left other traces of his presence besides the crumpled papers. On the table in the window were several shreds from a pencil which had been sharpened. A broken tip of lead was lying there also. Evidently the rascal had copied the paper in a great hurry, had broken his pencil, and had been compelled to put a fresh point to it."

"Excellent!" said Holmes, who was recovering his good humor as his attention became more engrossed by the case. "Fortune has been your friend."

"This was not all. I have a new writing-table with a fine surface of red leather. I am prepared to swear, and so is Bannister, that it was smooth and unstained. Now I found a clean cut in it about three inches long—not a mere scratch, but a positive cut. Not only this, but on the table I found a small ball of black dough or clay, with specks or something which looks like sawdust in it. I am convinced that these marks were left by the man who rifled the papers. There were no foot-marks and no other evidence as to his identity. I was at my wit's end, when suddenly the happy thought occurred to me that you were in the town, and I came straight round to put the matter into your hands. Do help me, Mr. Holmes. You see my dilemma. Either I must find the man or else the examination must be postponed until fresh papers are prepared, and since this cannot be done without explanation, there will ensue a hideous scandal, which will throw a cloud not only on the college, but on the university. Above all things, I desire to settle the matter quietly and discreetly."

"I shall be happy to look into it and to give you such advice as I can," said Holmes, rising and putting on his overcoat. "The case is not entirely devoid of interest. Had anyone visited you in your room after the papers came to you?"

"Yes, young Daulat Ras, an Indian student, who lives on the same stair, came in to ask me some particulars about the examination."

"For which he was entered?"

"Yes."

"And the papers were on your table?"

"To the best of my belief, they were rolled up."

"But might be recognized as proofs?"

"Possibly."

"No one else in your room?"

"No."

"Did anyone know that these proofs would be there?"

"No one save the printer."

"Did this man Bannister know?"

"No, certainly not. No one knew."

"Where is Bannister now?"

"He was very ill, poor fellow. I left him collapsed in the chair. I was in such a hurry to come to you."

"You left your door open?"

"I locked up the papers first."

"Then it amounts to this, Mr. Soames: that, unless the Indian student recognized the roll as being proofs, the man who tampered with them came upon them accidentally without knowing that they were there."

"So it seems to me."

Holmes gave an enigmatic smile.

"Well," said he, "let us go round. Not one of your cases, Watson—mental, not physical. All right; come if you want to. Now, Mr. Soames—at your disposal!"

The sitting-room of our client opened by a long, low, latticed window on to the ancient lichen-tinted court of the old college. A Gothic arched door led to a worn stone staircase. On the ground floor was the tutor's room. Above were three students, one on each story. It was already twilight when we reached the scene of our problem. Holmes halted and looked earnestly at the window. Then he approached it, and, standing on tiptoe with his neck craned, he looked into the room.

"He must have entered through the door. There is no opening except the one pane," said our learned guide.

"Dear me!" said Holmes, and he smiled in a singular way as he glanced at our companion. "Well, if there is nothing to be learned here, we had best go inside."

The lecturer unlocked the outer door and ushered us into his room. We stood at the entrance while Holmes made an examination of the carpet.

"I am afraid there are no signs here," said he. "One could hardly hope for any upon so dry a day. Your servant seems to have quite recovered. You left him in a chair, you say. Which chair?"

"By the window there."

"I see. Near this little table. You can come in now. I have finished with the carpet. Let us take the little table first. Of course, what has happened is very clear. The man entered and took the papers, sheet by sheet, from the central table. He carried them over to the window table, because from there he could see if you came across the courtyard, and so could effect an escape."

"As a matter of fact, he could not," said Soames, "for I entered by the side door."

"Ah, that's good! Well, anyhow, that was in his mind. Let me see the three strips. No finger impressions—no! Well, he carried over this one first, and he copied it. How long would it take him to do that, using every possible contraction? A quarter of an hour, not less. Then he tossed it down and seized the next. He was in the midst of that when your return caused him to make a very hurried retreat—*very* hurried, since he had not time to replace the papers which would tell you that he had been there. You were not aware of any hurrying feet on the stair as you entered the outer door?"

"No, I can't say I was."

"Well, he wrote so furiously that he broke his pencil, and had, as you observe, to sharpen it again. This is of interest, Watson. The pencil was not an ordinary one. It was above the usual size, with a soft lead, the outer color was dark blue, the maker's name was printed in silver lettering, and the piece remaining is only about an inch and a half long. Look for such a pencil, Mr. Soames, and you have got your man. When I add that he possesses a large and very blunt knife, you have an additional aid."

Mr. Soames was somewhat overwhelmed by this flood of informa-

tion. "I can follow the other points," said he, "but really, in this matter of the length—"

Holmes held out a small chip with the letters NN and a space of clear wood after them.

"You see?"

"No, I fear that even now—"

"Watson, I have always done you an injustice. There are others. What could this NN be? It is at the end of a word. You are aware that Johann Faber is the most common maker's name. Is it not clear that there is just as much of the pencil left as usually follows the Johann?" He held the small table sideways to the electric light. "I was hoping that if the paper on which he wrote was thin, some trace of it might come through upon this polished surface. No, I see nothing. I don't think there is anything more to be learned here. Now for the central table. This small pellet is, I presume, the black, doughy mass you spoke of. Roughly pyramidal in shape and hollowed out, I perceive. As you say, there appear to be grains of sawdust in it. Dear me, this is very interesting. And the cut—a positive tear, I see. It began with a thin scratch and ended in a jagged hole. I am much indebted to you for directing my attention to this case, Mr. Soames. Where does that door lead to?"

"To my bedroom."

"Have you been in it since your adventure?"

"No, I came straight away for you."

"I should like to have a glance round. What a charming, old-fashioned room! Perhaps you will kindly wait a minute, until I have examined the floor. No, I see nothing. What about this curtain? You hang your clothes behind it. If anyone were forced to conceal himself in this room he must do it there, since the bed is too low and the wardrobe too shallow. No one there, I suppose?"

As Holmes drew the curtain I was aware, from some little rigidity and alertness of his attitude, that he was prepared for an emergency. As a matter of fact, the drawn curtain disclosed nothing but three or four suits of clothes hanging from a line of pegs. Holmes turned away, and stooped suddenly to the floor.

"Halloa! What's this?" said he.

It was a small pyramid of black, putty-like stuff, exactly like the one upon the table of the study. Holmes held it out on his open palm in the glare of the electric light.

"Your visitor seems to have left traces in your bedroom as well as in your sitting-room, Mr. Soames "

"What could he have wanted there?"

"I think it is clear enough. You came back by an unexpected way, and so he had no warning until you were at the very door. What could he do? He caught up everything which would betray him, and he rushed into your bedroom to conceal himself."

"Good gracious, Mr. Holmes, do you mean to tell me that, all the time I was talking to Bannister in this room, we had the man prisoner if we had only known it?"

"So I read it."

"Surely there is another alternative, Mr. Holmes. I don't know whether you observed my bedroom window?"

"Lattice-paned, lead framework, three separate windows, one swinging on hinge, and large enough to admit a man."

"Exactly. And it looks out on an angle of the courtyard so as to be partly invisible. The man might have effected his entrance there, left traces as he passed through the bedroom, and finally, finding the door open, have escaped that way."

Holmes shook his head impatiently.

"Let us be practical," said he. "I understand you to say that there are three students who use this stair, and are in the habit of passing your door?"

"Yes, there are."

"And they are all in for this examination?"

"Yes."

"Have you any reason to suspect any one of them more than the others?"

Soames hesitated.

"It is a very delicate question," said he. "One hardly likes to throw suspicion where there are no proofs."

"Let us hear the suspicions. I will look after the proofs."

"I will tell you, then, in a few words the character of the three

men who inhabit these rooms. The lower of the three is Gilchrist, a fine scholar and athlete, plays in the Rugby team and the cricket team for the college, and got his Blue for the hurdles and the long jump. He is a fine, manly fellow. His father was the notorious Sir Jabez Gilchrist, who ruined himself on the turf. My scholar has been left very poor, but he is hard-working and industrious. He will do well.

"The second floor is inhabited by Daulat Ras, the Indian. He is a quiet, inscrutable fellow, as most of those Indians are. He is well up in his work, though his Greek is his weak subject. He is steady and methodical.

"The top floor belongs to Miles McLaren. He is a brilliant fellow when he chooses to work—one of the brightest intellects of the university; but he is wayward, dissipated, and unprincipled. He was nearly expelled over a card scandal in his first year. He has been idling all this term, and he must look forward with dread to the examination."

"Then it is he whom you suspect?"

"I dare not go so far as that. But, of the three, he is perhaps the least unlikely."

"Exactly. Now, Mr. Soames, let us have a look at your servant, Bannister."

He was a little, white-faced, clean-shaven, grizzly-haired fellow of fifty. He was still suffering from this sudden disturbance of the quiet routine of his life. His plump face was twitching with his nervousness, and his fingers could not keep still.

"We are investigating this unhappy business, Bannister," said his master.

"Yes, sir."

"I understand," said Holmes, "that you left your key in the door?"

"Yes, sir."

"Was it not very extraordinary that you should do this on the very day when there were these papers inside?"

"It was most unfortunate, sir. But I have occasionally done the same thing at other times."

"When did you enter the room?"

"It was about half-past four. That is Mr. Soames' tea time"

"How long did you stay?"

"When I saw that he was absent, I withdrew at once."

"Did you look at these papers on the table?"

"No, sir—certainly not."

"How came you to leave the key in the door?"

"I had the tea-tray in my hand. I thought I would come back for the key. Then I forgot."

"Has the outer door a spring lock?"

"No, sir."

"Then it was open all the time?"

"Yes, sir."

"Anyone in the room could get out?"

"Yes, sir."

"When Mr. Soames returned and called for you, you were very much disturbed?"

"Yes, sir. Such a thing has never happened during the many years that I have been here. I nearly fainted, sir."

"So I understand. Where were you when you began to feel bad?"

"Where was I, sir? Why, here, near the door."

"That is singular, because you sat down in that chair over yonder near the corner. Why did you pass these other chairs?"

"I don't know, sir. It didn't matter to me where I sat."

"I really don't think he knew much about it, Mr. Holmes. He was looking very bad—quite ghastly."

"You stayed here when your master left?"

"Only for a minute or so. Then I locked the door and went to my room."

"Whom do you suspect?"

"Oh, I would not venture to say, sir. I don't believe there is any gentleman in this university who is capable of profiting by such an action. No, sir, I'll not believe it."

"Thank you, that will do," said Holmes. "Oh, one more word. You have not mentioned to any of the three gentlemen whom you attend that anything is amiss?"

"No, sir—not a word."

"You haven't seen any of them?"

"No, sir."

"Very good. Now, Mr. Soames, we will take a walk in the quadrangle, if you please."

Three yellow squares of light shone above us in the gathering gloom.

"Your three birds are all in their nests," said Holmes, looking up. "Halloa! What's that? One of them seems restless enough."

It was the Indian, whose dark silhouette appeared suddenly upon his blind. He was pacing swiftly up and down his room.

"I should like to have a peep at each of them," said Holmes. "Is it possible?"

"No difficulty in the world," Soames answered. "This set of rooms is quite the oldest in the college, and it is not unusual for visitors to go over them. Come along, and I will personally conduct you."

"No names, please!" said Holmes, as we knocked at Gilchrist's door. A tall, flaxen-haired, slim young fellow opened it, and made us welcome when he understood our errand. There were some really curious pieces of medieval domestic architecture within Holmes was so charmed with one of them that he insisted on drawing it in his notebook, broke his pencil, had to borrow one from our host, and finally borrowed a knife to sharpen his own. The same curious accident happened to him in the rooms of the Indian—a silent, little, hook-nosed fellow, who eyed us askance, and was obviously glad when Holmes' architectural studies had come to an end. I could not see that in either case Holmes had come upon the clue for which he was searching. Only at the third did our visit prove abortive. The outer door would not open to our knock, and nothing more substantial than a torrent of bad language came from behind it. "I don't care who you are. You can go to blazes!" roared the angry voice. "Tomorrow's the exam, and I won't be drawn by anyone."

"A rude fellow," said our guide, flushing with anger as we withdrew down the stair. "Of course, he did not realize that it was I who was knocking, but none the less his conduct was very uncourteous, and, indeed, under the circumstances rather suspicious."

Holmes' response was a curious one.

"Can you tell me his exact height?" he asked.

"Really, Mr. Holmes, I cannot undertake to say. He is taller than the Indian, not so tall as Gilchrist. I suppose five foot six would be about it."

"That is very important," said Holmes. "And now, Mr. Soames, I wish you good-night."

Our guide cried aloud in his astonishment and dismay. "Good gracious, Mr. Holmes, you are surely not going to leave me in this abrupt fashion! You don't seem to realize the position. Tomorrow is the examination. I must take some definite action tonight. I cannot allow the examination to be held if one of the papers has been tampered with. The situation must be faced."

"You must leave it as it is. I shall drop round early tomorrow morning and chat the matter over. It is possible that I may be in a position then to indicate some course of action. Meanwhile, you change nothing—nothing at all."

"Very good, Mr Holmes."

"You can be perfectly easy in your mind. We shall certainly find some way out of your difficulties. I will take the black clay with me, also the pencil cuttings. Good-bye."

When we were out in the darkness of the quadrangle, we again looked up at the windows. The Indian still paced his room. The others were invisible.

"Well, Watson, what do you think of it?" Holmes asked, as we came out into the main street. "Quite a little parlor game—sort of three-card trick, is it not? There are your three men. It must be one of them. You take your choice. Which is yours?"

"The foul-mouthed fellow at the top. He is the one with the worst record. And yet that Indian was a sly fellow also. Why should he be pacing his room all the time?"

"There is nothing in that. Many men do it when they are trying to learn anything by heart."

"He looked at us in a queer way."

"So would you, if a flock of strangers came in on you when you were preparing for an examination next day, and every moment

was of value. No, I see nothing in that. Pencils, too, and knives—all was satisfactory. But that fellow *does* puzzle me."

"Who?"

"Why, Bannister, the servant. What's his game in the matter?"

"He impressed me as being a perfectly honest man."

"So he did me. That's the puzzling part. Why should a perfectly honest man Well, well, here's a large stationer's. We shall begin our researches here."

There were only four stationers of any consequence in the town, and at each Holmes produced his pencil chips, and bid high for a duplicate. All were agreed that one could be ordered, but that it was not a usual size of pencil, and that it was seldom kept in stock. My friend did not appear to be depressed by his failure, but shrugged his shoulders in half-humorous resignation.

"No good, my dear Watson. This, the best and only final clue, has run to nothing. But, indeed, I have little doubt that we can build up a sufficient case without it. By Jove! my dear fellow, it is nearly nine, and the landlady babbled of green peas at seven-thirty. What with your eternal tobacco, Watson, and your irregularity at meals, I expect that you will get notice to quit, and that I shall share your downfall—not, however, before we have solved the problem of the nervous tutor, the careless servant, and the three enterprising students."

Holmes made no further allusion to the matter that day, though he sat lost in thought for a long time after our belated dinner. At eight in the morning, he came into my room just as I finished my toilet.

"Well, Watson," said he, "it is time we went down to St. Luke's. Can you do without breakfast?"

"Certainly."

"Soames will be in a dreadful fidget until we are able to tell him something positive."

"Have you anything positive to tell him?"

"I think so."

"You have formed a conclusion?"

"Yes, my dear Watson, I have solved the mystery."

"But what fresh evidence could you have got?"

"Aha! It is not for nothing that I have turned myself out of bed at the untimely hour of six. I have put in two hours' hard work and covered at least five miles, with something to show for it. Look at that!"

He held out his hand. On the palm were three little pyramids of black, doughy clay.

"Why, Holmes, you had only two yesterday."

"And one more this morning. It is a fair argument that wherever No. 3 came from is also the source of Nos. 1 and 2. Eh, Watson? Well, come along and put friend Soames out of his pain."

The unfortunate tutor was certainly in a state of pitiable agitation when we found him in his chambers. In a few hours the examination would commence, and he was still in the dilemma between making the facts public and allowing the culprit to compete for the valuable scholarship. He could hardly stand still, so great was his mental agitation, and he ran towards Holmes with two eager hands outstretched.

"Thank heaven that you have come! I feared that you had given it up in despair. What am I to do? Shall the examination proceed?"

"Yes, let it proceed, by all means."

"But this rascal?"

"He shall not compete."

"You know him?"

"I think so. If this matter is not to become public, we must give ourselves certain powers and resolve ourselves into a small private court-martial. You there, if you please, Soames! Watson, you here! I'll take the armchair in the middle. I think that we are now sufficiently imposing to strike terror into a guilty breast. Kindly ring the bell!"

Bannister entered, and shrank back in evident surprise and fear at our judicial appearance.

"You will kindly close the door," said Holmes. "Now, Bannister, will you please tell us the truth about yesterday's incident?"

The man turned white to the roots of his hair.

"I have told you everything, sir."

"Nothing to add?"

"Nothing at all, sir."

"Well, then, I must make some suggestions to you. When you sat down on that chair yesterday, did you do so in order to conceal some object which would have shown who had been in the room?"

Bannister's face was ghastly.

"No, sir, certainly not."

"It is only a suggestion," said Holmes, suavely. "I frankly admit that I am unable to prove it. But it seems probable enough, since the moment that Mr. Soames' back was turned, you released the man who was hiding in that bedroom."

Bannister licked his dry lips.

"There was no man, sir."

"Ah, that's a pity, Bannister. Up to now you may have spoken the truth, but now I know that you have lied."

The man's face set in sullen defiance.

"There was no man, sir."

"Come, come, Bannister!"

"No, sir, there was no one."

"In that case, you can give us no further information. Would you please remain in the room? Stand over there near the bedroom door. Now, Soames, I am going to ask you to have the great kindness to go up to the room of young Gilchrist, and to ask him to step down into yours."

An instant later the tutor returned, bringing with him the student. He was a fine figure of a man, tall, lithe, and agile, with a springy step and a pleasant, open face. His troubled blue eyes glanced at each of us, and finally rested with an expression of blank dismay upon Bannister in the farther corner.

"Just close the door," said Holmes. "Now, Mr. Gilchrist, we are all quite alone here, and no one need ever know one word of what passes between us. We can be perfectly frank with each other. We want to know, Mr. Gilchrist, how you, an honorable man, ever came to commit such an action as that of yesterday?"

The unfortunate young man staggered back, and cast a look full of horror and reproach at Bannister.

"No, no, Mr. Gilchrist, sir, I never said a word—never one word!" cried the servant.

"No, but you have now," said Holmes. "Now, sir, you must see that after Bannister's words your position is hopeless, and that your only chance lies in a frank confession."

For a moment Gilchrist, with upraised hand, tried to control his writhing features. The next he had thrown himself on his knees beside the table, and burying his face in his hands, he had burst into a storm of passionate sobbing.

"Come, come," said Holmes, kindly, "it is human to err, and at least no one can accuse you of being a callous criminal. Perhaps it would be easier for you if I were to tell Mr. Soames what occurred, and you can check me where I am wrong. Shall I do so? Well, well, don't trouble to answer. Listen, and see that I do you no injustice.

"From the moment, Mr. Soames, that you said to me that no one, not even Bannister, could have told that the papers were in your room, the case began to take a definite shape in my mind. The printer one could, of course, dismiss. He could examine the papers in his own office. The Indian I also thought nothing of. If the proofs were in a roll, he could not possibly know what they were. On the other hand, it seemed an unthinkable coincidence that a man should dare to enter the room, and that by chance on that very day the papers were on the table. I dismissed that. The man who entered knew that the papers were there. How did he know?

"When I approached your room, I examined the window. You amused me by supposing that I was contemplating the possibility of someone having in broad daylight, under the eyes of all these opposite rooms, forced himself through it. Such an idea was absurd. I was measuring how tall a man would need to be in order to see, as he passed, what papers were on the central table. I am six feet high, and I could do it with an effort. No one less than that would have a chance. Already you see I had reason to think that, if one of your three students was a man of unusual height, he was the most worth watching of the three.

"I entered, and I took you into my confidence as to the suggestions of the side table. Of the center table I could make nothing,

until in your description of Gilchrist you mentioned that he was a long-distance jumper. Then the whole thing came to me in an instant, and I only needed certain corroborative proofs, which I speedily obtained.

"What happened was this: This young fellow had employed his afternoon at the athletic grounds, where he had been practicing the jump. He returned carrying his jumping-shoes, which are provided, as you are aware, with several sharp spikes. As he passed your window he saw, by means of his great height, these proofs upon your table, and conjectured what they were. No harm would have been done had it not been that, as he passed your door, he perceived the key which had been left by the carelessness of your servant. A sudden impulse came over him to enter, and see if they were indeed the proofs. It was not a dangerous exploit, for he could always pretend that he had simply looked in to ask a question.

"Well, when he saw that they were indeed the proofs, it was then that he yielded to temptation. He put his shoes on the table. What was it you put on that chair near the window?"

"Gloves," said the young man.

Holmes looked triumphantly at Bannister. "He put his gloves on the chair, and he took the proofs, sheet by sheet, to copy them. He thought the tutor must return by the main gate, and that he would see him. As we know, he came back by the side gate. Suddenly he heard him at the very door. There was no possible escape. He forgot his gloves, but he caught up his shoes and darted into the bedroom. You observe that the scratch on that table is slight at one side, but deepens in the direction of the bedroom door. That in itself is enough to show us that the shoe had been drawn in that direction, and that the culprit had taken refuge there. The earth round the spike had been left on the table, and a second sample was loosened and fell in the bedroom. I may add that I walked out to the athletic grounds this morning, saw that tenacious black clay is used in the jumping-pit, and carried away a specimen of it, together with some of the fine tan or sawdust which is strewn over it to prevent the athlete from slipping. Have I told the truth, Mr. Gilchrist?"

The student had drawn himself erect.

"Yes, sir, it is true," said he.

"Good heavens! have you nothing to add?" cried Soames.

"Yes, sir, I have, but the shock of this disgraceful exposure has bewildered me. I have a letter here, Mr. Soames, which I wrote to you early this morning in the middle of a restless night. It was before I knew that my sin had found me out. Here it is, sir. You will see that I have said, 'I have determined not to go in for the examination. I have been offered a commission in the Rhodesian Police, and I am going out to South Africa at once.'"

"I am indeed pleased to hear that you did not intend to profit by your unfair advantage," said Soames. "But why did you change your purpose?"

Gilchrist pointed to Bannister.

"There is the man who set me in the right path," said he.

"Come now, Bannister," said Holmes. "It will be clear to you, from what I have said, that only you could have let this young man out, since you were left in the room, and must have locked the door when you went out. As to his escaping by that window, it was incredible. Can you not clear up the last point in his mystery, and tell us the reasons for your action?"

"It was simple enough, sir, if you only had known, but, with all your cleverness, it was impossible that you could know. Time was, sir, when I was butler to old Sir Jabez Gilchrist, this young gentleman's father. When he was ruined I came to the college as servant, but I never forgot my old employer because he was down in the world. I watched his son all I could for the sake of the old days. Well, sir, when I came into this room yesterday, when the alarm was given, the very first thing I saw was Mr. Gilchrist's tan gloves a-lying in that chair. I knew those gloves well, and I understood their message. If Mr. Soames saw them, the game was up. I flopped down into that chair, and nothing would budge me until Mr. Soames went for you. Then out came my poor young master, whom I had dandled on my knee, and confessed it all to me. Wasn't it natural, sir, that I should save him, and wasn't it natural also that I should try to speak to him as his dead father would have

done, and make him understand that he could not profit by such a deed? Could you blame me, sir?"

"No, indeed," said Holmes, heartily, springing to his feet. "Well, Soames, I think we have cleared your little problem up, and our breakfast awaits us at home. Come, Watson! As to you, sir, I trust that a bright future awaits you in Rhodesia. For once you have fallen low. Let us see, in the future, how high you can rise."

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Make a list of the important items of evidence in the order in which they are introduced.

2. How did Holmes know that the culprit must have entered by the door and not the window? Point out other examples of Holmes' excellent powers of observation.

3. When Holmes said, "Yes, my dear Watson, I have solved the mystery," were you prepared to name the culprit? In what instance did the author play unfairly—that is, put the detective in possession of evidence which is not revealed to the reader? How important was this "fresh evidence" in the solution of the problem?

4. What does Holmes mean when he says, "Watson, I have always done you an injustice. There are others"? What purposes does Dr. Watson serve in the story?

5. Use the dictionary for: injudicious, discretion, acquiescence, gesticulation, baize, enigmatic, lichen-tinted, abortive, corroborative.

SOMETHING TO DO

1. Arrange an exercise in observation for your class. This may take the form of a collection of objects spread out on a table, and uncovered for a few seconds only. Then let each pupil list all the items he can remember. Or the test may consist of a brief dramatization, after which each pupil tries to answer a list of prepared questions as to what happened.

2. Report to the class on the history of the detective story, naming a number of the great detectives of fiction. A good reference book on this subject is Howard Haycraft's *Murder for Pleasure, or, The Life and Times of the Detective Story*. Another good book for the purpose is the anthology prepared by Ellery Queen, *101 Years' Enter-*

tainment: *The Great Detective Stories, 1841-1941*. In this book thirty-one famous detectives are represented by a story about each, all arranged in chronological order.

FOR FURTHER READING:
DETECTIVE SHERLOCK HOLMES

Sherlock Holmes is not only the most famous of all fiction detectives, but also one of the few whose exploits are told chiefly in short-story form. Although there are only four long stories about him (*A Study in Scarlet*, *The Sign of the Four*, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, and *The Valley of Fear*), there are 56 short stories. You will do well to procure the various Sherlock Holmes books by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and thus read all the other fascinating stories of this greatest of fictional detectives.

Enthusiasts will be interested in three books about Sherlock Holmes that appeared in 1944:

The Misadventures of Sherlock Holmes, edited by Ellery Queen. (Little, Brown: Boston) This contains a burlesque Holmes story by Bret Harte, called "The Stolen Cigar Case," which will amuse you.

Profile by Gaslight, An Irregular Reader about the Private Life of Sherlock Holmes, edited by Edgar W. Smith. (Simon and Schuster: New York) The editor belongs to a club of Holmes admirers in New York, called "The Baker Street Irregulars."

Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson, A Study in Friendship, edited by Christopher Morley. (Harcourt, Brace: New York.) Mr. Morley says this is a textbook for schools, whether he is serious or not, I can't say.

HUMOR: CHUCKLES AND LAUGHS

Just as we find entertainment in stories full of thrilling action, so for amusement we turn to stories which make us laugh. *Humor* is one of the commonest elements in popular stories.

Humor is not always obvious. Many a story which the author has written with the intent of drawing a laugh or smile from the reader misses fire. It is also true that some people have a hard time seeing the point of any joke. And the difficulty increases with the slyness or subtlety of the humor. So it will sometimes happen that a reader fails to see the humor of a situation, the clever twist to a phrase, the ridiculous exaggeration, or the sly dig at foolish people, which to someone more sensitive may seem irresistibly funny. You can only hope that by reading many humorous stories your own awareness of the ridiculous will be sharpened, till from even the subtlest humor you will reap the reward of laughter.

THE CATBIRD SEAT

James Thurber

Try out your sensitivity to humor by reading the following story. I hope you will get as much fun from it as I do. From its opening, which seems grave enough, you might not suspect this of being a humorous story. But when you find that Mr. Martin has decided to "rub out" Mrs. Ulgine Barrows, you may well sense that the story is not to be taken too seriously. And when you hear Ulgine talk, you should be certain of the author's humorous purpose.

MR. MARTIN bought the pack of Camels on Monday night in the most crowded cigar store on Broadway. It was theater time and seven or eight men were buying cigarettes. The clerk didn't even glance at Mr. Martin, who put the pack in his overcoat pocket and went out. If any of the staff at F & S had seen him buy the cigarettes, they would have been astonished, for it was generally known that Mr. Martin did not smoke, and never had. No one saw him.

It was just a week to the day since Mr. Martin had decided to rub out Mrs. Ulgine Barrows. The term "rub out" pleased him because it suggested nothing more than the correction of an error—in this case an error of Mr. Fitweiler. Mr. Martin had spent each night of the past week working out his plan and examining it. As he walked home now he went over it again. For the hundredth time he resented the element of imprecision, the margin of guesswork that entered into the business. The project as he had worked it out was casual and bold, the risks were considerable. Something might go wrong anywhere along the line. And therein lay the cunning of his scheme. No one would ever see in it the cau-

tious, painstaking hand of Erwin Martin, head of the filing department at F & S, of whom Mr. Fitweiler had once said, "Man is fallible but Martin isn't." No one would see his hand, that is, unless it were caught in the act.

Sitting in his apartment, drinking a glass of milk, Mr. Martin reviewed his case against Mrs. Ulaine Barrows, as he had every night for seven nights. He began at the beginning. Her quacking voice and braying laugh had first profaned the halls of F & S on March 7, 1941 (Mr. Martin had a head for dates). Old Roberts, the personnel chief, had introduced her as the newly appointed special adviser to the president of the firm, Mr. Fitweiler. The woman had appalled Mr. Martin instantly, but he hadn't shown it. He had given her his dry hand, a look of studious concentration, and a faint smile. "Well," she had said, looking at the papers on his desk, "are you lifting the oxcart out of the ditch?" As Mr. Martin recalled that moment, over his milk, he squirmed slightly. He must keep his mind on her crimes as a special adviser, not on her peccadillos as a personality. This he found difficult to do, in spite of entering an objection and sustaining it. The faults of the woman as a woman kept chattering on in his mind like an unruly witness. She had, for almost two years now, baited him. In the halls, in the elevator, even in his own office, into which she romped now and then like a circus horse, she was constantly shouting these silly questions at him. "Are you lifting the oxcart out of the ditch? Are you tearing up the pea patch? Are you hollering down the rain barrel? Are you scraping around the bottom of the pickle barrel? Are you sitting in the catbird seat?"

It was Joey Hart, one of Mr. Martin's two assistants, who had explained what the gibberish meant. "She must be a Dodger fan," he had said. "Red Barber announces the Dodger games over the radio and he uses those expressions—picked 'em up down South." Joey had gone on to explain one or two. "Tearing up the pea patch" meant going on a rampage; "sitting in the catbird seat" meant sitting pretty, like a batter with three balls and no strikes on him. Mr. Martin dismissed all this with an effort. It had been annoying, it had driven him near to distraction, but he was too solid a man to be moved to murder by anything so childish. It was for-

fortunate, he reflected as he passed on to the important charges against Mrs. Barrows, that he had stood up under it so well. He had maintained always an outward appearance of polite tolerance. "Why, I even believe you like the woman," Miss Paired, his other assistant, had once said to him. He had simply smiled.

A gavel rapped in Mr. Martin's mind and the case proper was resumed. Mrs. Ulguine Barrows stood charged with willful, blatant, and persistent attempts to destroy the efficiency and system of F & S. It was competent, material, and relevant to review her advent and rise to power. Mr. Martin had got the story from Miss Paired, who seemed always able to find things out. According to her, Mrs. Barrows had met Mr. Fitweiler at a party, where she had rescued him from the embraces of a powerfully built drunken man who had mistaken the president of F & S for a famous retired Middle Western football coach. She had led him to a sofa and somehow worked upon him a monstrous magic. The aging gentleman had jumped to the conclusion there and then that this was a woman of singular attainments, equipped to bring out the best in him and in the firm. A week later he had introduced her into F & S as his special adviser. On that day confusion got its foot in the door. After Miss Tyson, Mr. Brundage, and Mr. Bartlett had been fired and Mr. Munson had taken his hat and stalked out, mailing in his resignation later, old Roberts had been emboldened to speak to Mr. Fitweiler. He mentioned that Mr. Munson's department had been "a little disrupted" and hadn't they perhaps better resume the old system there? Mr. Fitweiler had said certainly not. He had the greatest faith in Mrs. Barrows' ideas. "They require a little seasoning, a little seasoning, is all," he had added. Mr. Roberts had given it up. Mr. Martin reviewed in detail all the changes wrought by Mrs. Barrows. She had begun chipping at the cornices of the firm's edifice and now she was swinging at the foundation stones with a pickaxe.

Mr. Martin came now, in his summing up, to the afternoon of Monday, November 2, 1942—just one week ago. On that day, at 3 P. M., Mrs. Barrows had bounced into his office. "Boo!" she had yelled. "Are you scraping around the bottom of the pickle barrel?" Mr. Martin had looked at her from under his green eye-

shade, saying nothing. She had begun to wander about the office, taking it in with her great, popping eyes. "Do you really need *all* these filing cabinets?" she had demanded suddenly. Mr. Martin's heart had jumped. "Each of these files," he had said, keeping his voice even, "plays an indispensable part in the system of F & S." She had brayed at him, "Well, don't tear up the pea patch!" and gone to the door. From there she had bawled, "But you sure have got a lot of fine scrap in here!" Mr. Martin could no longer doubt that the finger was on his beloved department. Her pickaxe was on the upswing, poised for the first blow. It had not come yet; he had received no blue memo from the enchanted Mr. Fitweiler bearing nonsensical instructions deriving from the obscene woman. But there was no doubt in Mr. Martin's mind that one would be forthcoming. He must act quickly. Already a precious week had gone by. Mr. Martin stood up in his living room, still holding his milk glass. "Gentlemen of the jury," he said to himself, "I demand the death penalty for this horrible person."

The next day Mr. Martin followed his routine, as usual. He polished his glasses more often and once sharpened an already sharp pencil, but not even Miss Paired noticed. Only once did he catch sight of his victim; she swept past him in the hall with a patronizing "Hi!" At five-thirty he walked home, as usual, and had a glass of milk, as usual. He had never drunk anything stronger in his life—unless you could count ginger ale. The late Sam Schlosser, the S of F & S, had praised Mr. Martin at a staff meeting several years before for his temperate habits. "Our most efficient worker neither drinks nor smokes," he had said. "The results speak for themselves." Mr. Fitweiler had sat by, nodding approval.

Mr. Martin was still thinking about that red-letter day as he walked over to the Schrafft's on Fifth Avenue near Forty-sixth Street. He got there, as he always did, at eight o'clock. He finished his dinner and the financial page of the *Sun* at a quarter to nine, as he always did. It was his custom after dinner to take a walk. This time he walked down Fifth Avenue at a casual pace. His gloved hands felt moist and warm, his forehead cold. He transferred the Camels from his overcoat to a jacket pocket. He

wondered, as he did so, if they did not represent an unnecessary note of strain. Mrs. Barrows smoked only Luckies. It was his idea to puff a few puffs on a Camel (after the rubbing-out), stub it out in the ashtray holding her lipstick-stained Luckies, and thus drag a small red herring across the trail. Perhaps it was not a good idea. It would take time. He might even choke, too loudly.

Mr. Martin had never seen the house on West Twelfth Street where Mrs. Barrows lived, but he had a clear enough picture of it. Fortunately, she had bragged to everybody about her ducky first-floor apartment in the perfectly darling three-story red-brick. There would be no doorman or other attendants; just the tenants of the second and third floors. As he walked along, Mr. Martin realized that he would get there before nine-thirty. He had considered walking north on Fifth Avenue from Schrafft's to a point from which it would take him until ten o'clock to reach the house. At that hour people were less likely to be coming in or going out. But the procedure would have made an awkward loop in the straight thread of his casualness, and he had abandoned it. It was impossible to figure when people would be entering or leaving the house, anyway. There was a great risk at any hour. If he ran into anybody, he would simply have to place the rubbing-out of Ulgine Barrows in the inactive file forever. The same thing would hold true if there were someone in her apartment. In that case he would just say that he had been passing by, recognized her charming house, and thought to drop in.

It was eighteen minutes after nine when Mr. Martin turned into Twelfth Street. A man passed him, and a man and a woman, talking. There was no one within fifty paces when he came to the house, halfway down the block. He was up the steps and in the small vestibule in no time, pressing the bell under the card that said "Mrs. Ulgine Barrows." When the clicking in the lock started, he jumped forward against the door. He got inside fast, closing the door behind him. A bulb in a lantern hung from the hall ceiling on a chain seemed to give a monstrously bright light. There was nobody on the stair, which went up ahead of him along the left wall. A door opened down the hall in the wall on the right. He went toward it swiftly, on tiptoe.

"Well, for God's sake, look who's here!" bawled Mrs. Barrows, and her braying laugh rang out like the report of a shotgun. He rushed past her like a football tackle, bumping her. "Hey, quit shoving!" she said, closing the door behind them. They were in her living room, which seemed to Mr. Martin to be lighted by a hundred lamps. "What's after you?" she said. "You're as jumpy as a goat." He found he was unable to speak. His heart was wheezing in his throat. "I—yes," he finally brought out. She was jabbering and laughing as she started to help him off with his coat. "No, no," he said. "I'll put it here." He took it off and put it on a chair near the door. "Your hat and gloves, too," she said. "You're in a lady's house." He put his hat on top of the coat. Mrs. Barrows seemed larger than he had thought. He kept his gloves on. "I was passing by," he said. "I recognized—is there anyone here?" She laughed louder than ever. "No," she said, "we're all alone. You're as white as a sheet, you funny man. Whatever *has* come over you? I'll mix you a toddy." She started toward a door across the room. "Scotch-and-soda be all right? But say, you don't drink, do you?" She turned and gave him her amused look. Mr. Martin pulled himself together. "Scotch-and-soda will be all right," he heard himself say. He could hear her laughing in the kitchen.

Mr. Martin looked quickly around the living room for the weapon. He had counted on finding one there. There were and-irons and a poker and something in a corner that looked like an Indian club. None of them would do. It couldn't be that way. He began to pace around. He came to a desk. On it lay a metal paper knife with an ornate handle. Would it be sharp enough? He reached for it and knocked over a small brass jar. Stamps spilled out of it and it fell to the floor with a clatter. "Hey," Mrs. Barrows yelled from the kitchen, "are you tearing up the pea patch?" Mr. Martin gave a strange laugh. Picking up the knife, he tried its point against his left wrist. It was blunt. It wouldn't do.

When Mrs. Barrows reappeared, carrying two highballs, Mr. Martin, standing there with his gloves on, became acutely conscious of the fantasy he had wrought. Cigarettes in his pocket, a drink

prepared for him—it was all too grossly improbable. It was more than that; it was impossible. Somewhere in the back of his mind a vague idea stirred, sprouted. “For heaven’s sake, take off those gloves,” said Mrs. Barrows. “I always wear them in the house,” said Mr. Martin. The idea began to bloom, strange and wonderful. She put the glasses on a coffee table in front of a sofa and sat on the sofa. “Come over here, you odd little man,” she said. Mr. Martin went over and sat beside her. It was difficult getting a cigarette out of the pack of Camels, but he managed it. She held a match for him, laughing. “Well,” she said, handing him his drink, “this is perfectly marvellous. You with a drink and a cigarette.”

Mr. Martin puffed, not too awkwardly, and took a gulp of the highball. “I drink and smoke all the time,” he said. He clinked his glass against hers. “Here’s nuts to that old windbag, Fitweiler,” he said, and gulped again. The stuff tasted awful, but he made no grimace. “Really, Mr. Martin,” she said, her voice and posture changing, “you are insulting our employer.” Mrs. Barrows was now all special adviser to the president. “I am preparing a bomb,” said Mr. Martin, “which will blow the old goat higher than hell.” He had only had a little of the drink, which was not strong. It couldn’t be that. “Do you take dope or something?” Mrs. Barrows asked coldly. “Heroin,” said Mr. Martin. “I’ll be coked to the gills when I bump that old buzzard off.” “Mr. Martin!” she shouted, getting to her feet. “That will be all of that. You must go at once.” Mr. Martin took another swallow of his drink. He tapped his cigarette out in the ashtray and put the pack of Camels on the coffee table. Then he got up. She stood glaring at him. He walked over and put on his hat and coat. “Not a word about this,” he said, and laid an index finger against his lips. All Mrs. Barrows could bring out was “Really!” Mr. Martin put his hand on the doorknob. “I’m sitting in the catbird seat,” he said. He stuck his tongue out at her and left. Nobody saw him go.

Mr. Martin got to his apartment, walking, well before eleven. No one saw him go in. He had two glasses of milk after brushing his teeth, and he felt elated. It wasn’t tipsiness, because he hadn’t

been tipsy. Anyway, the walk had worn off all effects of the whiskey. He got in bed and read a magazine for a while. He was asleep before midnight.

Mr. Martin got to the office at eight-thirty the next morning, as usual. At a quarter to nine, Ulging Barrows, who had never before arrived at work before ten, swept into his office. "I'm reporting to Mr. Fitweiler now!" she shouted. "If he turns you over to the police, it's no more than you deserve!" Mr. Martin gave her a look of shocked surprise. "I beg your pardon?" he said. Mrs. Barrows snorted and bounced out of the room, leaving Miss Paired and Joey Hart staring after her. "What's the matter with that old devil now?" asked Miss Paired. "I have no idea," said Mr. Martin, resuming his work. The other two looked at him and then at each other. Miss Paired got up and went out. She walked slowly past the closed door of Mr. Fitweiler's office. Mrs. Barrows was yelling inside, but she was not braying. Miss Paired could not hear what the woman was saying. She went back to her desk.

Forty-five minutes later, Mrs. Barrows left the president's office and went into her own, shutting the door. It wasn't until half an hour later that Mr. Fitweiler sent for Mr. Martin. The head of the filing department, neat, quiet, attentive, stood in front of the old man's desk. Mr. Fitweiler was pale and nervous. He took his glasses off and twiddled them. He made a small, bruffing sound in his throat. "Martin," he said, "you have been with us more than twenty years." "Twenty-two, sir," said Mr. Martin. "In that time," pursued the president, "your work and your—uh—manner have been exemplary." "I trust so, sir," said Mr. Martin. "I have understood, Martin," said Mr. Fitweiler, "that you have never taken a drink or smoked." "That is correct, sir," said Mr. Martin. "Ah, yes." Mr. Fitweiler polished his glasses. "You may describe what you did after leaving the office yesterday, Martin," he said. Mr. Martin allowed less than a second for his bewildered pause. "Certainly, sir," he said. "I walked home. Then I went to Schrafft's for dinner. Afterward I walked home again. I went to bed early, sir, and read a magazine for a while. I was asleep before eleven." "Ah, yes," said Mr. Fitweiler again. He was silent for a moment, searching for the proper words to say

to the head of the filing department. "Mrs. Barrows," he said finally, "Mrs. Barrows has worked hard, Martin, very hard. It grieves me to report that she has suffered a severe breakdown. It has taken the form of a persecution complex accompanied by distressing hallucinations." "I am very sorry, sir," said Mr. Martin. "Mrs. Barrows is under the delusion," continued Mr. Fitweiler, "that you visited her last evening and behaved yourself in an—uh—unseemly manner." He raised his hand to silence Mr. Martin's little pained outcry. "It is the nature of these psychological diseases," Mr. Fitweiler said, "to fix upon the least likely and most innocent party as the—uh—source of persecution. These matters are not for the lay mind to grasp, Martin. I've just had my psychiatrist, Dr. Fitch, on the phone. He would not, of course, commit himself, but he made enough generalizations to substantiate my suspicions. I suggested to Mrs. Barrows, when she had completed her—uh—story to me this morning, that she visit Dr. Fitch, for I suspected a condition at once. She flew, I regret to say, into a rage, and demanded—uh—requested that I call you on the carpet. You may not know, Martin, but Mrs. Barrows had planned a reorganization of your department—subject to my approval, of course, subject to my approval. This brought you, rather than anyone else, to her mind—but again that is a phenomenon for Dr. Fitch and not for us. So, Martin, I am afraid Mrs. Barrows' usefulness here is at an end." "I am dreadfully sorry, sir," said Mr. Martin.

It was at this point that the door to the office blew open with the suddenness of a gas-main explosion and Mrs. Barrows catapulted through it. "Is the little rat denying it?" she screamed. "He can't get away with that!" Mr. Martin got up and moved discreetly to a point beside Mr. Fitweiler's chair. "You drank and smoked at my apartment," she bawled at Mr. Martin, "and you know it! You called Mr. Fitweiler an old windbag and said you were going to blow him up when you got coked to the gills on your heroin!" She stopped yelling to catch her breath and a new glint came into her popping eyes. "If you weren't such a drab, ordinary little man," she said, "I'd think you'd planned it all. Sticking your tongue out, saying you were sitting in the catbird seat, because you

thought no one would believe me when I told it! My God, it's really too perfect!" She brayed loudly and hysterically, and the fury was on her again. She glared at Mr. Fitweiler. "Can't you see how he has tricked us, you old fool? Can't you see his little game?" But Mr. Fitweiler had been surreptitiously pressing all the buttons under the top of his desk and employees of F & S began pouring into the room. "Stockton," said Mr. Fitweiler, "you and Fishbein will take Mrs. Barrows to her home. Mrs. Powell, you will go with them." Stockton, who had played a little football in high school, blocked Mrs. Barrows as she made for Mr. Martin. It took him and Fishbein together to force her out of the door into the hall, crowded with stenographers and office boys. She was still screaming imprecations at Mr. Martin, tangled and contradictory imprecations. The hubbub finally died out down the corridor.

"I regret that this has happened," said Mr. Fitweiler. "I shall ask you to dismiss it from your mind, Martin." "Yes, sir," said Mr. Martin, anticipating his chief's "That will be all" by moving to the door. "I will dismiss it." He went out and shut the door, and his step was light and quick in the hall. When he entered his department he had slowed down to his customary gait, and he walked quietly across the room to the W20 file, wearing a look of studious concentration.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. One source of humor is the contrast between how people are expected to behave under certain conditions and how they do behave. What actions in this story made you chuckle because they are so out of keeping with the situation or with your impression of the character's normal behavior?
2. Why did Mr. Fitweiler refuse to believe Mrs. Barrows when she reported the shocking events of the previous evening?
3. Did the victim's realization that she was being outsmarted help her or hurt her in establishing her story? In what way?
4. Consider the plot of this story, the struggle between the two forces. List the events of the plot in the order of their occurrence. Notice how Mr. Martin's purpose shifts during the course of the action.
5. Use the dictionary for: imprecision, fallible, peccadillos, sin-

gular, obscene, patronizing, exemplary, hallucinations, surreptitiously, imprecations.

SOMETHING TO DO

The ability to tell a joke or a humorous anecdote effectively is well worth cultivating. Come to class prepared to tell one or the other. As the pupils tell their stories, try to discover why some of them bring forth laughs and others fall flat. Sometimes the cause is in the story itself, and sometimes it is only in the telling.

FOR FURTHER READING: HUMOROUS STORIES

Howard Brubaker	.....	The Milk Pitcher
Henry Cuyler Bunner	. . . .	A Sisterly Scheme
Ellis Parker Butler	.....	Pigs Is Pigs
Erskine Caldwell	....	Snacker
Bret Harte	.....	The Stolen Cigar Case
Washington Irving	.....	The Legend of Sleepy Hollow
		Wolfert Webber, or Golden Dreams
Owen Johnson	....	The Great Pancake•Record
Arthur Morrison	. . . .	That Brute Simmons
William Saroyan	.....	Locomotive 38
Wilbur Schramm	....	My Kingdom for Jones
William Hazlett Upson	.....	The Wonders of Science

THE TALL TALE

ONE special type of humorous story dear to the hearts of American readers is the *tall tale*. In stories of this type, ridiculously impossible events are told with the sober seriousness that usually accompanies the gospel truth. The successful ones are told with such a careful attention to detail that in spite of their wild exaggeration they almost seem true. Many tall tales are the natural development of years and years of retelling a given yarn, each teller adding just a little more spicy exaggeration to make his version better than the last. The famous tales about Paul Bunyan, the great logger, developed in this manner in lumber camps all over our country.

One of the rules of the game is that a person listening to one of these "fish stories" must not interrupt or express his disbelief. If he wishes revenge, he must counter with an even wilder story of his own. His victim must listen politely to him, too.

So no matter how outrageously you see the truth being stretched in a tall tale, you must take it and like it!

PECOS BILL AND THE WILLFUL COYOTE

William C. White

Many tall tales of Pecos Bill have developed among the cowboys of the American Southwest just as the familiar yarns of the great Paul Bunyan developed in the northern lumber camps. In this story of "Pecos Bill and the Willful Coyote," William C. White gives us from his vivid imagination the final adventure in Pecos Bill's thrilling career.

THE great legendary cowboy of Texas, Pecos Bill, used to sing of himself,

Oh, I'm wild and woolly
And full of fleas,
Ain't never been curried
Below the knees.

I'm a wild she-wolf
From Bitter Creek
And it's my night
To h-o-w-l!

No one of the many stories tells precisely what happened to him at the end of his career. They don't tell because no one knows except Panhandle Pete who was there and he wouldn't talk until just recently.

Here, for the first time, is Pete's story.

There were a lot of things Pecos Bill used to like, Pete says, and liquor and women and the smell of sagebrush and the way the prairie looked in spring and shooting and riding and singing and the taste of beef broiled over a little outdoor fire were just a few of the things he liked. But I guess what he liked best was hunting coyotes. Ever since he'd been a small boy he'd chased coyotes, trapped coyotes, shot coyotes, thrown rocks at coyotes, and run them ragged on foot until they dropped, with their tongues hang-

ing out. "They're smart animules," Bill always said. "It's a test of a man's intelligence to outthink 'em."

As Bill got older and his wind wasn't so good any more, he had to give up chasing coyotes, that is, until Baby came along.

I was with him the night he ran into Baby and I'll never forget it. We were riding along forty miles south of El Paso on as nice a night as I ever saw. The stars were out and it was bright. There was even a piece of moon. That was what made it so funny. We were riding along and Bill was singing,

Beat the drums lowly and play your fifes slowly,
Play the dead march as you drag me along.
Take me to the graveyard and lay a sod o'er me.
For I'm a poor cowboy and I know I done wrong.

Pecos Bill always sang that song when he was feeling extra happy.

All of a sudden he says, "That's funny!"

"What's funny?"

"There, on that ridge, that thunderstorm coming up."

I looked and saw a black cloud coming up all right but the stars and the moon were still shining.

"Never saw a thunderstorm on a starbright night," Bill said. "I'd call that almost a first-class miracle."

Something flashed on the ridge and Bill said, "It's lightning all right." We rode on faster. Bill stopped sudden. "That's funny!"

"What's funny?"

"Did you hear any thunder after that lightning?"

"Nope." I said that because I didn't hear any thunder and we were close enough to the storm to hear it if there was any thunder. "Nope, I didn't hear any."

"Look! Lightning again and no thunder!" Bill shook his head. "I believe in miracles but only one at a time. A thunderstorm so close with lightning and no thunder, that's almost a first-class miracle."

We rode closer and suddenly we heard a sound. I guess you'd call it laughter but it was a child's laughter and a woman's laughter

and a waterfall's laughter, mixed with a horse's neigh and the noise of a tin can full of pebbles, and the roar of a lot of cowboys howling at a joke. It sounded like "Hayheehaw! Haiharhoo! Hearhoi-heh!" and ended with "Huh, huh, huh!" delicate, like a sceptical baby.

"A laughing thunderstorm," Bill said angry, "would be a third miracle. Hell, that's a coyote and the lightning is his eyes flashing!"

The black cloud raised a head and we could see right enough it was a coyote and the biggest one I ever saw and no one ever saw a bigger one. It was easy to tell it was a female because she walked dainty. She was so big she'd have to lie on her side and bend her neck out of shape to nibble at sagebrush. She must have heard us for the next thing she came at us, just like a thunderstorm that got up on its heels and began chasing you. She went by in such a rush, the air around was chilly for the next half hour. Bill didn't have a chance to draw his gun and fire. All he said was "Oh, Baby!"

That's how Baby got her name!

"Baby!" Bill repeated.

Somewhere, off in the distance, in the next county or maybe over in New Mexico we heard the "Hayheehaw" and so on and then the final "Huh, huh, huh!"

Bill was awful thoughtful for a while. "I'm going to hunt that baby and get her if it's the last thing I do. Baby! There's a coyote's coyote!"

Me and Bill hunted Baby all that year and all the next and the year after that and the year after that, too. Maybe there were even more years but those are all I remember. It was a long time.

Hunting Baby wasn't hard. She was always obliging and willing to hang around and be hunted. We chased her over most of Texas. When we couldn't find her on dark nights she'd let out that laugh of hers, particularly the "Huh, huh, huh" part, and off we'd go. Other times her eyes would flash in the distance and there we'd go again. Sometimes that fooled us—more than fifty times we saw flashes like that and went off hell for leather and found that what we were chasing on the horizon was really a thunderstorm or a

twister. Of course, when it thundered, then we knew it wasn't Baby. Half the times Baby'd have been lying low, watching us make fools of ourselves. As we turned back soaking wet we'd hear her "Huh, huh, huh!" off in the other direction. Other times we could get on her trail by waiting till she went to a water hole. She had a thirst like a desert and could drink a hole dry with the noise of a rusty pump. Some nights when we thought we'd lost her, her tracks would help us. They were always deep round holes and you couldn't miss 'em. It's getting off my story but it was those tracks that helped develop West Texas—they were so deep they caught a lot of rain water and held it through dry spells and the grass grew thick around 'em. A lot of cattlemen today still use those tracks for water holes.

It wasn't hunting Baby that was tough, it was bagging her. In five years Pecos Bill must have had a thousand shots at her, from all distances from a hundred feet to a mile, and he shot at her with lead and iron and silver and a couple of times with a shot gun full of scrap iron. Nothing took any effect. Sometimes the stuff we fired hit Baby's sides and bounced back at us. Once we had to hide under a *mesquite* thicket for an hour while it rained railroad scrap all around us. As a six-inch piece of steel rail hit Bill on the neck he said, "We just won't try that one again. It's like being hunted by a coyote and shot at."

Other times when Baby was feeling frisky she didn't bother to bounce bullets back at us. She just timed the shot so that as it came to her she leaped up in the air and the bullets went right under her. Then she'd land with a smack you could hear a long way off and sometimes the earth would crack under her. Half the *arroyos*, those little canyons, in West Texas is from where Baby landed after those jumps. She'd have probably started up a couple of earthquakes in any country not so tough as West Texas.

"That Baby!" Bill would say after missing her once again. He sounded awful proud. "She's just willful! Plumb willful!"

I guess it got to be a game with Baby because no matter what we tried to do, her laugh never changed or got angry or snarly. Some nights when Bill didn't feel like going out after her, Baby'd

hang around and there was a kind of disappointment in her laugh, like a kid you promised ice cream for supper he didn't get.

I know it got to be a game with Bill and I never saw him so happy. Of course, from time to time we'd take a job to get enough money to try out some new scheme Bill had thought up for getting Baby. That was all he did think about, night after night. He figured out all kinds of baits and snares and deevices but none of 'em worked. He figured out every kind of trap. After Baby picked up one of 'em and heaved it in the air with her hind foot and it landed on Bill and me and kept us pinned down for five days, we gave up traps. Even that didn't make Bill sore. He laughed and shook his head. "That Baby! She's smart." That was the way he was talking about her. Sometimes when he saw Baby running in the moonlight he'd say, "Look at the way that moonlight shines her gray fur! I bet you never saw anything prettier." And when she'd run fast Bill'd say, "I bet that's the fastest animule there is!" The way he'd talk, you might have thought Bill was raising a child to show off at the State Fair.

One idea Bill had almost did get Baby. The idea was to chase her into the middle of Randall County, which we did, and then to run barbed wire right around the boundaries of the county, which we did. We used all the barbed wire in West Texas doing it and we strung it right. When we got done, stringing it over trees and poles and houses, I never saw such a mess of barbed wire. There wasn't a hole in it big enough for a rattlesnake to crawl through and we ran it so high that not even Baby could jump over it. There we had Baby penned up right and all we had to do now was to wait until she got too weak to move. That wouldn't take too long because we'd been having a drought and the water holes were as dry as sun-bleached bones. And Baby was always thirsty.

We must have waited outside that barbed wire a couple of weeks and all the time Bill kept saying, "We got her this time all right, we got her! She won't be willful no more!" And Bill would jump around excited like a colt in a loco patch.¹ "When man matches his intelligence with animules," Bill would say, "man must

¹ loco patch: patch of locoweed, which, when eaten by cattle or horses, causes the animals to "go loco"

win. That's natchural!" Every night we heard Baby crying inside there behind the wire like she was trying to find a way out and getting madder and madder. The more she cried the more Bill grinned and yelled, "We got her this time!"

Then one night when we were watching there was a new sound behind the wire, a soft "Plop, plop, plop!"

"What's that mean?" Bill asked nervous. "Sounds like she was throwing mud pies." Then he guessed it. "Baby's digging, that's what it is. She's trying to dig her way out and she's throwing up dirt!" He looked half proud as he said, "I knew she'd figure out something to do." He looked half mad as he said, "That won't get her nowhere. We'll surround the fence and when her head shows we'll wallop her."

So Bill called out all the people from Potter, Armstrong, Swisher, and Deaf Smith counties, the ones around Randall. They were glad to stand watch because they're always glad to take a crack at anyone or anything coming from Randall County.

Three days and three nights we waited and the "Plop, plop, plop" continued but it got fainter and fainter as Baby dug deeper. "This time we got her sure," Bill said. He patrolled the fence day and night with a paddle made from a wagon tongue.

About midnight we heard a new kind of noise. It began as a hiss and turned into a roar and the earth shook and half the people around the fence ran like hell. The roar got louder and right then I felt rain in my face. It felt like rain, it was wet, but when I got some on my hand it had a funny smell.

In the midst of the loud roaring we heard a funny noise. It was "Hayheehaw," and the rest of it and then "Huh, huh, huh!" It sounded awful frightened, but it wasn't coming from back of the fence, it was coming from somewhere behind us.

"That's Baby!" Bill started to jump. "And she's out, she's gotten out!" I never saw a man so mad but he wasn't so mad he couldn't say, "She's that smart, that Baby."

It was beginning to rain even harder. "How'd she get out?"

"Blew out," Bill said. "That's not rain, it's oil. It's got the same smell as the stuff I used to rub on my stiff joints. She dug to hit a pocket and a gusher blew her out."

Way off in the distance, running like a breeze toward Mexico, we heard Baby. "That scared her," Bill said rueful. "She ought to know I didn't mean to have it happen like that. She's scared. She won't come back."

Her laugh was awful faint. "She must be over the Rio Grande by now."

Bill nodded. "I didn't think she'd take it like that" He sounded all choked up and he went to his horse and rode off like mad toward Amarillo.

It took me four days to find him. When I caught up with him he was in Amarillo at the Unweaned Calf bar. He wasn't alone, either. Somewhere he'd picked up a girl whose name was Kankakee Katie. I ain't much for women myself— I never learned how to tell a good one from a bad one and I've never been sure there's any real difference. Katie was a big blonde and from the way she was lapping up *pulque*,² a pretty fair forager. She was comforting Bill and that was what mattered. I heard he'd been crying for three days when he got to town. Now he sat gloomy like and all he'd say was "Baby!"

"Who's this Baby you're muling over?" Katie asked him.

He just shook his head.

"I never heard a man make as much fuss over me," Katie said like it annoyed her.

Bill just says "Baby," dreamy like.

"It's awful bad manners," Katie said, "to keep grieving over one lady when you're in the company of another."

"Baby was no lady," Bill said.

"What was she, a hell cat?"

Bill shook his head. "A coyote!"

"That's no way to talk about her," Katie said, like she had to defend her sex. "What was she, blond or brunet?"

"Gray," Bill said, "gray like early morning. Baby!"

Katie lapped up some more *pulque*. "I think you're loco but I tell you, I could go for a man who'd say 'Katie' the way you say 'Baby.'"

Bill reached for the bottle and began to cry at the same time and

² *pulque* (pōōl'kâ): a Mexican alcoholic drink.

when he cries it's like the first freshets coming down an *arroyo* in spring.

"Katie," I said, "he's really upset about a coyote." I told her about Baby and how Bill was afraid she was gone for good.

"He's grieving like that over a four-footed long-haired howling animal?" I didn't know whether Katie was going to laugh or upset the table. She didn't do either. She began to cry. "I never thought I'd meet such a tender-hearted person in all my life. Bill reminds me of my mother—she was tender-hearted like that, too." And she cried as hard as Bill.

Bill blinked and smiled at me. "Pete, here's what I need—sympathy and a chance to forget Baby." As he pounded his fist on the table, the walls of the Unweaned Calf shook and the barkeep looked scared. "Katie, if you'll have me, I'm yours. How's for marrying me and lighting out and we'll get a little ranch and raise cattle?"

Katie didn't know whether she was being kidded or not. Then she hit the table with her fist and the walls shook even harder and down to the floor dropped a little guy who was standing at the bar but not holding on tight. "Pardner," Katie said. "I heard about marriage and I always wanted to try it. It's a deal!" She stopped crying and dried her eyes on her shirtwaist sleeve. "We'll get a ranch house and we'll paper the walls with the pages of a mail-order catalogue and make everything snug." Then she looked worried. "Nope, it's only a dream."

Bill's face got black. "When I make a promise it's a promise."

Katie shook her head. "What about Baby? I know men better than anything in the world except maybe women. Sooner or later you'll get the old hankering to go after Baby and then not even a good woman's love or a forty-foot fence could hold you."

"I told you I was through with Baby," Bill roared and he made such a noise the little guy at the bar hit the floor again.

"A man's a man and a woman's a fool for forgetting it," Katie said, almost ready to cry again. "I just can't risk having my heart broken over a coyote." She finished off the bottle of *pulque*. "Nope, we'll stay friends, Bill, and I'll be a sister to you."

"I'll be consternated!" Bill yelled. "I believe you're jealous of Baby!"

"A lady has a right to her feelings, such as she feels," Katie said, wiping her eyes on her shirtwaist sleeve. "I'll tell you what to do, Bill. I ain't going to have no coyote come between us. You bring me Baby's hide and I'll marry you."

Bill just sat back in his chair.

"Besides, it'd be convenient to have," Katie said. "If Baby's as big as you say we could use the hide for a parlor rug and have some lap over in the dining room and what's left we could stuff chinks with."

"I can't do that," Bill said promptly. "I've been trying for years with no luck."

"You don't sound like you even wanted to get it," Katie said with a pout.

"Sure I want to get it, but how?"

"You talk like you're glad a coyote's smarter than Pecos Bill."

"That's enough." Bill banged the table and half the bottles on the bar fell down. "It's a bargain. I'll get it."

"Right now?"

"Right now!"

"Then I'll go off and hunt up a wedding dress and some shoes," Katie said. "You bring the hide back here and we'll have the hottest wedding there ever was in Amarillo." She headed for the door, like a barn being carried off in a spring flood.

Bill didn't say anything for quite a while. He picked up the *pulque* bottle and found it was empty. He asked, "Got any ideas, Pete?"

"About Katie?" I shook my head.

"About getting Baby. I can't let the little woman down."

He stood up and started to the bar. "Let's have a drink and start thinking."

When Bill asked the barkeep for *pulque* the barkeep shook his head. "You finished the last bottle. I haven't got a drop."

"Then gimme whiskey."

"On top of *pulque*?" The barkeep looked astonished and the little man beside the bar fell to the floor and lay there.

"What's wrong with that?" Bill asked, getting hot.

"You mix my drinks like that, they'll take the hide off you." But the barkeep poured out whiskey. "However, it's your hide"

Bill swung around like he was boiling mad. "What did you say?"

"I said if you mix my drinks they'll take the hide off you—!"

"Yeep!" Bill brought a fist down on the bar and cracked the top plank. "We got it!" He slugged down the whiskey. "We got it!"

I thought he was crazy. "Got what?"

He pounded me on the back and I bounced toward the front door. "Hurry out, Pete, and get two big water tanks!"

Well, I came back to the bar with the tanks and when I got there Bill had every bottle off the shelves and he was opening them so fast the popping of corks sounded like gunfire. From somewhere he had got fifty gallons of *pulque* and that went into the tanks first. Then he poured in all the whiskey in the place.

He was awful enthusiastic. "We'll mix up a drink for Baby that'll take her hide off sure. There's been a drought in this Dust Bowl and we'll pick up a good dry water hole, fill it up with this mixture, and see what Baby does."

In the tanks went twenty gallons of rum, three cases of Bourbon, seven bottles of gin, and a bottle of soda water. The barkeep came up from the cellar with another armful of bottles. One of them had a funny shape.

"What's that?" Bill asked.

"Something called 'Cream dess Violets.' A salesman give it to me."

"Put it in!"

"Here's Liquor dess Peaches."

"Put it in!"

In went cherry brandy, a bottle of bitters, and a gallon of Dago red. Bill didn't look satisfied. "Got anything else in bottles?"

The barkeep who was baldheaded handed over a flask of hair tonic.

Bill stuck his finger in the soup and licked it. "Tastes pretty nearly right. What else you got?"

The barkeep offered a bottle of ketchup and that went in.

Again Bill sampled the results. "Almost right. Got anything else in a bottle?"

"Some perfume called Eau d'Amour I was saving for my wife."

"Put it in!"

Bill stuck his finger in once more. "That's perfect! It ought to take the hide off a cactus!"

Three teams of horses and ten men and the biggest dray in the county drew the tanks out to the water hole that Bill had decided to use. He had to hope the odor would attract Baby, wherever she was. The mixture from one tank went into the hole with a splash and the odor it gave off knocked seven men to the ground. I felt a little dizzy myself but Bill was too excited to notice anything. Twenty-one lizards who lived around that hole ran to it, took one small drink, and twenty of them lay on their backs with their toes turned up. The twenty-first just vanished in a small explosion.

After the men revived they started to move the second tank to the hole but Bill stopped them. "Hold it! Baby may not come here before this stuff dries up and we'd better save the other tank for another night. We never could mix this drink again the same way."

With the hole half filled we drove off a piece and waited. We waited a long while and we tried to keep Bill quiet but he was pretty nervous. Most of the time he said, "I hope she comes." Sometimes he said, "This is a dirty trick to play on Baby!" Even from a mile away the water hole smelled like an old barroom on Sunday morning. Bill walked up and down saying, "I wonder where Baby is, I wonder what Katie's doing, I wonder if Baby is coming, I wonder if Katie is getting ready," until he sounded all mixed up, as if he was expecting Katie to turn up at the water hole while Baby got ready for a wedding.

Every so often there would be little explosions at the water hole and Bill said, "That must be jack rabbits coming in for a drink! Boy, if only Baby'd come."

Then we heard a funny noise off in the distance, the noise of a rush of a big wind. Bill knew what it was and he yelled, "It's Baby! She's sniffing!" A minute later, over the horizon, came

the black shadow that was Baby, running full speed. She came so fast that she had to stop herself at the water hole by braking with her front feet and threw up a sandstorm that blacked out El Paso three days later. We were too excited to pay any attention.

We saw the shadow stand by the hole and we watched Baby lower her head. We heard one more sniff, like a tornado taking a deep breath, and then there was an explosion and a roar that knocked us flat. Bill stood up first. "That got her!" He began jumping. "That got her!" And he started to the hole with all of us running like mad.

Bill beat us all there and when we caught up to him he said, "I'm consternated! Look at this!" There lay Baby's hide, thick, gray, tangled and matted, but there was nothing of Baby inside it. Bill didn't know what to do or think. He just stood scratching his head. "I didn't think it would work as good as that." He shook his head. "Well, I got her at last!" His voice sounded funny. Then he said, "Load as much of the hide as you can on the wagon and drag the rest. We'll get back to town and see Katie."

We put a lot of the hide on the wagon and it was piled up like a hayrick. On the way back to town Bill remembered the unused tank of the mixture. "I'm going to bottle and sell it," he said. "It'll be a wonderful thing for knocking off warts and freckles."

We pulled up in front of the Unweaned Calf and Bill yelled, "Hey, Katie!" He was feeling pretty good again. "Hey, Katie, come out and see what I got!"

A flock of barflies rushed out but no Katie, and Bill began to grumble. "Look at the trouble you go to, just for a woman and then she's off primping herself and too busy to come look." He decided to wait for her and invited everyone in for a drink. By this time fifty guys were going up and down the street boasting how they caught the coyote by putting whiskey on her tail.

The barkeep had renewed his stock from somewhere and Bill ordered drinks all around. After twenty minutes he began to yell, "Hey, Katie!"

The barkeep gave him a funny look. "You mean that blonde you were talking to yesterday?"

"Yeah, what about her?"

"Last night a cowhand comes in with a couple hundred dollars and said he was going up to San Antone. Katie said she always wanted to see San Antone so she goes with him. They left about midnight!"

Well, Bill stowed the hide and the tank of mixture away in a shed and he said, "Let's get out of this country, Pete." We went over to New Mexico for a time, punching cattle, but it wasn't the same Bill. He was thoughtful and silent and he never sang any more. He never talked about Baby, either. Then we drifted back to El Paso again and got a job at the One Legged M Ranch. Bill worked hard but his heart wasn't in his work. At night he used to leave our shack and go out and sit somewhere by himself and he got sore if I offered to go along. When he did talk, he was pretty gloomy. "I'm getting old," he'd say. "I think we ought to go out to Californy for our last days. That's where rich Texans and poor Texicans³ go before they die. They sit in the sun, I heard, and eat oranges."

Once he said, "I done wrong killing Baby. I shouldn'ta done it. I was so happy when she was around to chase, I didn't know how happy I was."

I couldn't get him interested in roping or riding or liquor or shooting. As for women, when the sister of the owner of the One Legged M came for a visit Bill ran off and hid in the hills for a week.

He came back with a funny look on his face and he wouldn't talk. But that night he said, "Come along with me."

We walked a mile from the ranch buildings. Bill said mysteriously, "Hear anything?"

All I heard was a lot of crickets and maybe a lizard in the grass. I asked, "Where?"

"Over there, back of that hill."

I listened again and I heard a horse neighing. "I don't hear nothing special."

Bill wasn't even listening to me. He was grinning like a kid. "I can hear her, coming nearer." He shook his head. "She

³ Texicans: Texans of Mexican descent.

sounds mighty lonesome tonight, mighty lonesome." He repeated, "So lonesome, that 'Huh, huh, huh!'"

I knew who he was talking about. I just chewed on a piece of grass and said nothing.

"You sure you don't hear nothing?" Bill asked.

"I got a cold." I tried to hide what I was thinking about Bill "I don't hear nothing so good."

The next day I found Bill in the bunkhouse packing his kit. "I'm going back to Amarillo," he said and he wouldn't explain why. "I just got an idea, that's all."

He did explain on the way back. "Baby's still hanging around waiting for me, Pete. I know it." He glared at me. "You think I'm crazy."

I shook my head mighty quick. "Different people hear different things."

"The reason we can't see her is because she has no hide," Bill said like he'd thought it out. "Did you ever see a coyote without a hide?"

"Nope, I never did."

"No one ever did and that proves it. If a coyote's going to be seen he just has to have a hide!"

We rode on quite a spell and I didn't have a word to say.

Then Bill said, "When we get to Amarillo, I'm going after Baby."

I almost fell off my horse and it wasn't the horse's fault. "How will you do that?"

Bill didn't say. We came into town and he went to the shed where he stored all the stuff after he got Baby's hide. It was still there but except to pat it once, he wasn't interested in it. He went right to the tank of mixture and pounded it.

It sounded as empty as a dry well.

"It's gone and I can't even mix it again," Bill said, and he sounded heartbroken. "I figured that maybe if I drank some of it, it'd put me in the same shape as Baby. Then I could have gone after her."

I just shook my head. I couldn't say a word.

Bill began to fuss around the tank. With the top off he lowered himself inside. Then I heard him yell, "Get a cup, Pete! There's just a little bit left here."

I got him a cup and he fished up one cupful and even for that he had to scrape bottom. When he came from the tank he was grinning from earlobe to earlobe. I was pretty worried but I figured he knew what he was doing.

"You going to drink this now?"

"No, sir," Bill said with a lot of pride. "I'm going to drink it fit and proper." And with that he began to sing

Oh, I'm wild and woolly
And full of fleas,
Ain't never been curried
Below the knees!

I tried to argue with him all the way to the Unweaned Calf but his mind was made up. He just kept singing. He told the barkeep, "This time I brought my own liquor."

The barkeep looked suspicious. "How about a chaser?"⁴

"I hope I'll never need a chaser," Bill said, with a pleasant laugh. He looked around the room and saw about twenty people. "Come on, folks, gather round and I'll show you something you can tell your grandchildren." He raised the cup but I was feeling too bad to watch close.

Before he tastes it he sings

Take me to the graveyard and lay a sod o'er me,
For I'm a poor cowboy and I know I done wrong!

When I heard that I knew he was extra happy again.

"Pete!" he said to me. "You've been a good friend. When you find someone like Baby, don't treat her bad!"

Then he takes a good long swig from the cup.

There's a sort of flash and explosion, not loud but gentle like and when I look up, Bill's gone. Completely gone and not a sign of him! Then, and the men who were in the Unweaned Calf at that moment will swear to it, drunk or sober, we heard a gentle flutter-

⁴ **chaser**: a small drink, usually of water, taken after a drink of alcoholic liquor.

ing sound. Down from the ceiling like falling leaves came the clothes Bill had been wearing, his shirt, his hat, his pants, his boots, and the hand-carved belt he was so proud of. For a second they stood by themselves, just as if Bill was inside 'em, then they collapsed to the floor.

And that was the end of Pecos Bill, as far as anyone knew.

I hung around town for a couple of days but I was awful lonesome so I went back to my job at the One Legged M, feeling like a lost calf. I worked extra hard by day so I'd be good and tired at nights but even then I couldn't sleep.

One night I got up and walked out to where Bill and me used to sit. I was there in the quiet and I just couldn't forget Bill. The only noise I heard was a couple of lizards in the grass.

Now, I ain't going to swear to this because I never heard it again but as I was sitting there that night a wind came up sudden and it got real cold. The grass began to move or I thought it did. And right behind me I heard "Hayheehaw!" and so on and then "Huh, huh, huh!" Maybe it could have been the wind in the trees but there weren't any trees and anyway, where did that sudden wind come from? A minute later I swear I heard Bill's voice, as happy as a little child, laughing, "That Baby! She's just willful!" It sounded as if he was chasing along behind, doing what he liked to do most in all this world.

But I couldn't see a thing.

I would even think that I had dreamed it except that the next morning Bert Simmons who owns the One Legged M called us outside and we followed him behind the barn. The ground there used to be as level and smooth as a piece of harness strap but this morning there was a brand new *arroyo*, fifty feet deep and running for a quarter mile, just like a big crack in the earth. It was the sort of crack we used to see when Bill and me shot and Baby jumped in the air to duck and then landed hard.

Well, I'm sure that wasn't the finish of the whole thing although I never again heard a sound like Baby or saw any traces. But I've been reading in the newspapers about those California earthquakes and I remember what Bill used to say about wanting to finish his days in California. No one knows what causes those earthquakes,

I hear, but I got my own ideas ever since I heard that California was a sort of soft place, nowhere near as tough as West Texas and a whole lot more brittle.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. What details in this tall tale did you find particularly humorous?
2. One characteristic of the American tall tale is that it accounts humorously for the origins of certain physical features of the country. What features of the landscape are explained in this story?
3. Point out grammatical errors and mispronunciations made by Pete, the narrator, and other persons in the story. What is gained by these devices?
4. In what ways does Pete try to give his story verisimilitude?
5. Use the dictionary for: mesquite, forager.

SOMETHING TO DO

1. Randall, Potter, Armstrong, Swisher, and Deaf Smith are names of actual counties, which you can find on the map of Texas. Select a geographical name that intrigues you. Look up the source of this name, and write a brief account of its origin. Or make up a tall tale explaining how the name might have originated. (A good book full of stories of the sources of American place names is *Names on the Land*, by George R. Stewart.)

2. Perhaps you would enjoy holding a "liars' club" contest in class. Each contestant tries to "top" the previous tall tale. The prize should go to the pupil who tells most convincingly the most preposterous story.

FOR FURTHER READING: TALL TALES

Many tall tales of folklore are to be found in Part IV of *A Treasury of American Folklore*, edited by B. A. Botkin (Crown, 1944). Professor Walter Blair has arranged the tall tales of America's legendary heroes into a sort of preposterous history, *Tall Tale America* (Coward-McCann, 1944). Sgt. John Davidson made a collection of G.I. Joe whoppers, with pictures, *Tall Tales They Tell in the Services* (Crowell, 1943). A more literary book, but harder to read because of the dialect, is Percy MacKaye's *Tall Tales from the Kentucky Mountains*. Of course everybody knows *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen*. Here are a few other tall tales:

PECOS BILL AND THE WILLFUL COYOTE 101

Walter D. Edmonds	The Death of Red Peril
Washington Irving	The Devil and Tom Walker
	Rip Van Winkle
Richard Middleton	The Ghost Ship
Wilbur Schramm	Windwagon Smith
Frank Richard Stockton	The Widow's Cruise
Mark Twain	Baker's Blue-Jay Yarn
	The Celebrated Jumping Frog
	of Calaveras County

ATMOSPHERE: EMOTIONAL RESPONSE

BESIDES the thrills of fast and furious action, and the pleasure that comes from humor, there is another kind of satisfaction that comes in reading short stories: *emotional response*.

In some stories the author's chief aim is to overwhelm the reader with some powerful emotional effect—as of pity, or regret for the past, or fearful foreboding, or—most often—horror. In such cases, he chooses every detail of time and place, of character and scene—every word, in fact—to help build up a unity of tone or mood which we call *atmosphere*. If he has been skillful, this atmosphere stirs up in the reader a powerful emotional reaction.

And here it may be said that for a reader there are very few unpleasant emotions. Strange as it may seem, even when the atmosphere is one of horror, the emotional reaction is a source of enjoyment. That people really enjoy being horrified (when it isn't "in earnest") cannot be doubted when we remember the great popularity of horror movies. The truth is that we cannot deny, any more than we can explain, the fact that for most readers horror is a pleasurable emotion.

THE BLACK CAT

Edgar Allan Poe

Poe is admittedly the master of the horror story. No one has ever surpassed him in building up the single emotional effect which is the purpose of such a story. In his stories no word is wasted; no other purposes are there to get in the reader's way.

Yet through your inability to use your own powers of imagination you may fail to secure the full thrill of horror from this story. This failure may be no fault of your own. In this day and age, by a turn of a dial, or by a short jaunt to a movie, you have had presented to you many such horror stories, most of them very well done. In both the movie versions and the radio scripts it has not been so necessary for you to use your imagination. In the movies you see before your very eyes what things look like. The radio provides many sound effects, and thereby relieves you of the necessity of supplying your own. In reading, however, you must rely solely on your own powers of imagination, for there are only the printed words on a page to guide you. If you can meet this challenge, "The Black Cat" will horrify you as it has horrified thousands of readers in the past.

For the most wild, yet most homely narrative which I am about to pen, I neither expect nor solicit belief. Mad indeed would I be to expect it, in a case where my very senses reject their own evidence. Yet, mad am I not—and very surely do I not dream. But tomorrow I die, and today I would unburthen my soul. My immediate purpose is to place before the world, plainly, succinctly, and without comment, a series of mere household events. In their consequences, these events have terrified—have tortured—have destroyed me. Yet I will not attempt to expound them. To me, they have presented little but Horror—to many they will seem less terrible than *baroques*.¹ Hereafter, perhaps, some intellect

¹ grotesque

may be found which will reduce my phantasm to the commonplace—some intellect, more calm, more logical, and far less excitable than my own, which will perceive, in the circumstances I detail with awe, nothing more than an ordinary succession of very natural causes and effects.

From my infancy I was noted for the docility and humanity of my disposition. My tenderness of heart was even so conspicuous as to make me the jest of my companions. I was especially fond of animals, and was indulged by my parents with a great variety of pets. With these I spent most of my time, and never was so happy as when feeding and caressing them. This peculiarity of character grew with my growth, and, in my manhood, I derived from it one of my principal sources of pleasure. To those who have cherished an affection for a faithful and sagacious dog, I need hardly be at the trouble of explaining the nature or the intensity of the gratification thus derivable. There is something in the unselfish and self-sacrificing love of a brute which goes directly to the heart of him who has had frequent occasion to test the paltry friendship and gossamer fidelity of mere *Man*.

I married early, and was happy to find in my wife a disposition not uncongenial with my own. Observing my partiality for domestic pets, she lost no opportunity of procuring those of the most agreeable kind. We had birds, goldfish, a fine dog, rabbits, a small monkey, and a *cat*.

This latter was a remarkably large and beautiful animal, entirely black, and sagacious to an astonishing degree. In speaking of his intelligence, my wife, who at heart was not a little tinctured with superstition, made frequent allusion to the ancient popular notion which regarded all black cats as witches in disguise. Not that she was ever *serious* upon this point—and I mention the matter at all for no better reason than that it happens, just now, to be remembered.

Pluto—this was the cat's name—was my favorite pet and play-mate. I alone fed him, and he attended me wherever I went about the house. It was even with difficulty that I could prevent him from following me through the streets.

Our friendship lasted, in this manner, for several years, during

which my general temperament and character—through the instrumentality of the Fiend Intemperance—had (I blush to confess it) experienced a radical alteration for the worse. I grew, day by day, more moody, more irritable, more regardless of the feelings of others. I suffered myself to use intemperate language to my wife. At length, I even offered her personal violence. My pets, of course, were made to feel the change in my disposition. I not only neglected, but ill-used them. For Pluto, however, I still retained sufficient regard to restrain me from maltreating him, as I made no scruple of maltreating the rabbits, the monkey, or even the dog, when by accident, or through affection, they came in my way. But my disease grew upon me—for what disease is like Alcohol!—and at length even Pluto, who was now becoming old, and consequently somewhat peevish—even Pluto began to experience the effects of my ill temper.

One night, returning home, much intoxicated, from one of my haunts about town, I fancied that the cat avoided my presence. I seized him; when, in his fright at my violence, he inflicted a slight wound upon my hand with his teeth. The fury of a demon instantly possessed me. I knew myself no longer. My original soul seemed, at once, to take its flight from my body, and a more than fiendish malevolence, gin-nurtured, thrilled every fibre of my frame. I took from my waistcoat pocket a pen-knife, opened it, grasped the poor beast by the throat, and deliberately cut one of its eyes from the socket! I blush, I burn, I shudder, while I pen the damnable atrocity.

When reason returned with the morning—when I had slept off the fumes of the night's debauch—I experienced a sentiment half of horror, half of remorse, for the crime of which I had been guilty; but it was, at best, a feeble and equivocal feeling, and the soul remained untouched. I again plunged into excess, and soon drowned in wine all memory of the deed.

In the meantime the cat slowly recovered. The socket of the lost eye presented, it is true, a frightful appearance, but he no longer appeared to suffer any pain. He went about the house as usual, but, as might be expected, fled in extreme terror at my approach. I had so much of my old heart left, as to be at first grieved

by this evident dislike on the part of a creature which had once so loved me. But this feeling soon gave place to irritation. And then came, as if to my final and irrevocable overthrow, the spirit of PERVERSENESS. Of this spirit philosophy takes no account. Yet I am not more sure that my soul lives, than I am that perverseness is one of the primitive impulses of the human heart—one of the indivisible primary faculties, or sentiments, which give direction to the character of Man. Who has not, a hundred times, found himself committing a vile or a silly action, for no other reason than because he knows he should *not*? Have we not a perpetual inclination, in the teeth of our best judgment, to violate that which is *Law*, merely because we understand it to be such? This spirit of perverseness, I say, came to my final overthrow. It was this unfathomable longing of the soul *to vex itself*—to offer violence to its own nature—to do wrong for the wrong's sake only—that urged me to continue and finally to consummate the injury I had inflicted upon the unoffending brute. One morning, in cool blood, I slipped a noose about its neck and hung it to the limb of a tree;—hung it with the tears streaming from my eyes, and with the bitterest remorse at my heart;—hung it *because* I knew that it had loved me, and *because* I felt it had given me no reason of offence;—hung it *because* I knew that in so doing I was committing a sin—a deadly sin that would so jeopardize my immortal soul as to place it—if such a thing were possible—even beyond the reach of the infinite mercy of the Most Merciful and Most Terrible God.

On the night of the day on which this cruel deed was done, I was aroused from sleep by the cry of fire. The curtains of my bed were in flames. The whole house was blazing. It was with great difficulty that my wife, a servant, and myself, made our escape from the conflagration. The destruction was complete. My entire worldly wealth was swallowed up, and I resigned myself thenceforward to despair.

I am above the weakness of seeking to establish a sequence of cause and effect between the disaster and the atrocity. But I am detailing a chain of facts—and wish not to leave even a possible link imperfect. On the day succeeding the fire, I visited the ruins. The walls, with one exception, had fallen in. This exception was

found in a compartment wall, not very thick, which stood about the middle of the house, and against which had rested the head of my bed. The plastering had here, in great measure, resisted the action of the fire—a fact which I attributed to its having been recently spread. About this wall a dense crowd were collected, and many persons seemed to be examining a particular portion of it with very minute and eager attention. The words “strange!” “singular!” and other similar expressions, excited my curiosity. I approached and saw, as if graven in *bas relief* upon the white surface, the figure of a gigantic *cat*. The impression was given with an accuracy truly marvellous. There was a rope about the animal’s neck.

When I first beheld this apparition—for I could scarcely regard it as less—my wonder and my terror were extreme. But at length reflection came to my aid. The cat, I remembered, had been hung in a garden adjacent to the house. Upon the alarm of fire, this garden had been immediately filled by the crowd—by some one of whom the animal must have been cut from the tree and thrown, through an open window, into my chamber. This had probably been done with the view of arousing me from sleep. The falling of other walls had compressed the victim of my cruelty into the substance of the freshly spread plaster, the lime of which, with the flames, and the *ammonia* from the carcass, had then accomplished the portraiture as I saw it.

Although I thus readily accounted to my reason, if not altogether to my conscience, for the startling fact just detailed, it did not the less fail to make a deep impression upon my fancy. For months I could not rid myself of the phantasm of the cat; and, during this period, there came back into my spirit a half-sentiment that seemed, but was not, remorse. I went so far as to regret the loss of the animal, and to look about me, among the vile haunts which I now habitually frequented, for another pet of the same species, and of somewhat similar appearance, with which to supply its place.

One night as I sat, half stupefied, in a den of more than infamy, my attention was suddenly drawn to some black object reposing upon the head of one of the immense hogsheads of Gin, or of Rum, which constituted the chief furniture of the apartment. I had

been looking steadily at the top of this hogshead for some minutes, and what now caused me surprise was the fact that I had not sooner perceived the object thereupon. I approached it, and touched it with my hand. It was a black cat—a very large one—fully as large as Pluto, and closely resembling him in every respect but one. Pluto had not a white hair upon any portion of his body; but this cat had a large, although indefinite splotch of white, covering nearly the whole region of the breast.

Upon my touching him, he immediately arose, purred loudly, rubbed against my hand, and appeared delighted with my notice. This, then, was the very creature of which I was in search. I at once offered to purchase it of the landlord; but this person made no claim to it—knew nothing of it—had never seen it before.

I continued my caresses, and when I prepared to go home, the animal evinced a disposition to accompany me. I permitted it to do so; occasionally stooping and patting it as I proceeded. When it reached the house it domesticated itself at once, and became immediately a great favorite with my wife.

For my own part, I soon found a dislike to it arising within me. This was just the reverse of what I had anticipated; but—I know not how or why it was—its evident fondness for myself rather disgusted and annoyed. By slow degrees, these feelings of disgust and annoyance rose into the bitterness of hatred. I avoided the creature; a certain sense of shame, and the remembrance of my former deed of cruelty, preventing me from physically abusing it. I did not, for some weeks, strike, or otherwise violently ill use it; but gradually—very gradually—I came to look upon it with unutterable loathing, and to flee silently from its odious presence, as from the breath of a pestilence.

What added, no doubt, to my hatred of the beast, was the discovery, on the morning after I brought it home, that, like Pluto, it also had been deprived of one of its eyes. This circumstance, however, only endeared it to my wife, who, as I have already said, possessed, in a high degree, that humanity of feeling which had once been my distinguishing trait, and the source of many of my simplest and purest pleasures.

With my aversion to this cat, however, its partiality for myself

seemed to increase. It followed my footsteps with a pertinacity which it would be difficult to make the reader comprehend. Whenever I sat, it would crouch beneath my chair, or spring upon my knees, covering me with its loathsome caresses. If I arose to walk it would get between my feet and thus nearly throw me down, or, fastening its long and sharp claws in my dress, clamber, in this manner, to my breast. At such times, although I longed to destroy it with a blow, I was yet withheld from so doing, partly by a memory of my former crime, but chiefly—let me confess it at once—by absolute *dread* of the beast.

This dread was not exactly a dread of physical evil—and yet I should be at a loss how otherwise to define it. I am almost ashamed to own—yes, even in this felon's cell, I am almost ashamed to own—that the terror and horror with which the animal inspired me, had been heightened by one of the merest chimeras it would be possible to conceive. My wife had called my attention, more than once, to the character of the mark of white hair, of which I have spoken, and which constituted the sole visible difference between the strange beast and the one which I had destroyed. The reader will remember that this mark, although large, had been originally very indefinite; but, by slow degrees—degrees nearly imperceptible, and which for a long time my Reason struggled to reject as fanciful—it had, at length, assumed a rigorous distinctness of outline. It was now the representation of an object that I shudder to name—and for this, above all, I loathed, and dreaded, and would have rid myself of the monster *had I dared*—it was now, I say, the image of a hideous—of a ghastly thing—of the GALLOWS!—oh, mournful and terrible engine of Horror and of Crime—of Agony and of Death!

And now was I indeed wretched beyond the wretchedness of mere Humanity. And a *brute beast*—whose fellow I had contemptuously destroyed—a *brute beast* to work out for *me*—for me a man, fashioned in the image of the High God—so much of insufferable woe! Alas! Neither by day nor by night knew I the blessing of Rest any more! During the former the creature left me no moment alone; and, in the latter, I started, hourly, from dreams of unutterable fear, to find the hot breath of *the thing* upon

my face, and its vast weight—an incarnate Nightmare that I had no power to shake off—incumbent eternally upon my *heart*!

Beneath the pressure of torments such as these, the feeble remnant of the good within me succumbed. Evil thoughts became my sole intimates—the darkest and most evil of thoughts. The moodiness of my usual temper increased to hatred of all things and of all mankind; while, from the sudden, frequent, and ungovernable outbursts of a fury to which I now blindly abandoned myself, my uncomplaining wife, alas! was the most usual and the most patient of sufferers.

One day she accompanied me, upon some household errand, into the cellar of the old building which our poverty compelled us to inhabit. The cat followed me down the steep stairs, and, nearly throwing me headlong, exasperated me to madness. Uplifting an axe, and forgetting, in my wrath, the childish dread which had hitherto stayed my hand, I aimed a blow at the animal which, of course, would have proved instantly fatal had it descended as I wished. But this blow was arrested by the hand of my wife. Goaded, by the interference, into a rage more than demoniacal, I withdrew my arm from her grasp and buried the axe in her brain. She fell dead upon the spot, without a groan.

This hideous murder accomplished, I set myself forthwith, and with entire deliberation, to the task of concealing the body. I knew that I could not remove it from the house, either by day or by night, without the risk of being observed by the neighbors. Many projects entered my mind. At one period I thought of cutting the corpse into minute fragments and destroying them by fire. At another, I resolved to dig a grave for it in the floor of the cellar. Again, I deliberated about casting it in the well in the yard—about packing it in a box, as if merchandise, with the usual arrangements, and so getting a porter to take it from the house. Finally I hit upon what I considered a far better expedient than either of these. I determined to wall it up in the cellar—as the monks of the middle ages are recorded to have walled up their victims.

For a purpose such as this the cellar was well adapted. Its walls were loosely constructed, and had lately been plastered throughout

with a rough plaster, which the dampness of the atmosphere had prevented from hardening. Moreover, in one of the walls was a projection, caused by a false chimney, or fireplace, that had been filled up, and made to resemble the rest of the cellar. I made no doubt that I could readily displace the bricks at this point, insert the corpse, and wall the whole up as before, so that no eye could detect anything suspicious.

And in this calculation I was not deceived. By means of a crowbar I easily dislodged the bricks, and, having carefully deposited the body against the inner wall, I propped it in that position, while, with little trouble, I relaid the whole structure as it originally stood. Having procured mortar, sand, and hair, with every possible precaution, I prepared a plaster which could not be distinguished from the old, and with this I very carefully went over the new brickwork. When I had finished, I felt satisfied that all was right. The wall did not present the slightest appearance of having been disturbed. The rubbish on the floor was picked up with the minutest care. I looked around triumphantly, and said to myself—"Here at least, then, my labor has not been in vain."

My next step was to look for the beast which had been the cause of so much wretchedness; for I had, at length, firmly resolved to put it to death. Had I been able to meet with it, at the moment, there could have been no doubt of its fate; but it appeared that the crafty animal had been alarmed at the violence of my previous anger, and forbore to present itself in my present mood. It is impossible to describe, or to imagine, the deep, the blissful sense of relief which the absence of the detested creature occasioned in my bosom. It did not make its appearance during the night—and thus for one night at least, since its introduction into the house, I soundly and tranquilly slept; aye, *slept* even with the burden of murder upon my soul!

The second and the third day passed, and still my tormentor came not. Once again I breathed as a free man. The monster, in terror, had fled the premises forever! I should behold it no more! My happiness was supreme! The guilt of my dark deed disturbed me but little. Some few inquiries had been made, but

these had been readily answered. Even a search had been instituted—but of course nothing was to be discovered. I looked upon my future felicity as secured.

Upon the fourth day of the assassination, a party of the police came, very unexpectedly, into the house, and proceeded again to make rigorous investigation of the premises. Secure, however, in the inscrutability of my place of concealment, I felt no embarrassment whatever. The officers bade me accompany them in their search. They left no nook or corner unexplored. At length, for the third or fourth time, they descended into the cellar. I quivered not in a muscle. My heart beat calmly as that of one who slumbers in innocence. I walked the cellar from end to end. I folded my arms upon my bosom, and roamed easily to and fro. The police were thoroughly satisfied and prepared to depart. The glee at my heart was too strong to be restrained. I burned to say if but one word, by way of triumph, and to render doubly sure their assurance of my guiltlessness.

"Gentlemen," I said at last, as the party ascended the steps, "I delight to have allayed your suspicions. I wish you all health, and a little more courtesy. By the bye, gentlemen, this—this is a very well constructed house." (In the rabid desire to say something easily, I scarcely knew what I uttered at all.) "I may say an *excellently* well constructed house. These walls—are you going, gentlemen?—these walls are solidly put together"; and here, through the mere frenzy of bravado, I rapped heavily, with a cane which I held in my hand, upon that very portion of the brickwork behind which stood the corpse of the wife of my bosom.

But may God shield and deliver me from the fangs of the Arch-Fiend! No sooner had the reverberation of my blows sunk into silence, than I was answered by a voice from within the tomb!—by a cry, at first muffled and broken, like the sobbing of a child, and then quickly swelling into one long, loud, and continuous scream, utterly anomalous and inhuman—a howl—a wailing shriek, half of horror and half of triumph, such as might have arisen only out of hell, conjointly from the throats of the damned in their agony and of the demons that exult in the damnation.

Of my own thoughts it is folly to speak. Swooning, I staggered

to the opposite wall. For one instant the party upon the stairs remained motionless, through extremity of terror and of awe. In the next, a dozen stout arms were toiling at the wall. It fell bodily. The corpse, already greatly decayed and clotted with gore, stood erect before the eyes of the spectators. Upon its head, with red extended mouth and solitary eye of fire, sat the hideous beast whose craft had seduced me into murder, and whose informing voice had consigned me to the hangman. I had walled the monster up within the tomb!

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. In a story with a clearly distinguished atmosphere, like "The Black Cat," it is worth while to notice with what degree of skill the author selects his details to produce a concentration of emotional effect. Point out, in the opening paragraph, all the details that help to establish the atmosphere of horror.

2. What were the first actual events in the story which made you shudder with horror?

3. How was the narrator himself made horrible?

4. Although there is a surprise in store for the reader at the end of this story, why is it not a surprise-ending story in the same sense that "Suspicion" is?

5. Did you enjoy being horrified by this story? One author of such tales, in the most friendly spirit, "fervently wishes his readers a few uncomfortable moments." Others call stories of this kind "delectable afflictions" which afford the reader "pleasant qualms," or speak of being "fascinated" by an "experience of sheer spiritual horror." Explain these terms.

6. Use the dictionary for: phantasm, malevolence, equivocal, felon, chimeras, incarnate, anomalous.

SOMETHING TO DO

1. In class, suggest for inclusion in a class list all the horrible sounds you would introduce into a radio version of "The Black Cat." Help the class make another list of sight images that would make vivid scenes of horror in a movie version.

2. The classic instance of atmosphere established quickly and effectively is the opening of Poe's story, "The Fall of the House of

Usher." This is how it begins (I have italicized the words that seem to achieve the atmosphere of gloom):

"During the whole of a *dull, dark, and soundless* day in the *autumn* of the year, when the *clouds* hung *oppressively* low in the heavens, I had been passing *alone*, on horseback, through a singularly *dreary* tract of country; and at length found myself, as the *shades* of the evening drew on, within view of the *melancholy* House of Usher. I know not how it was—but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of *insufferable gloom* pervaded my spirit. . . . I looked upon the scene before me—upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain—upon the *bleak* walls—upon the *vacant* eye-like windows—upon a few *rank* sedges—and upon a few *white* trunks of *decayed* trees—with an *utter depression* of soul."

Select some effect or atmosphere that you think you could produce in a story, such as joy, peace, fear, gloom. Make a list of sight and sound images which you associate with such an effect. Now list the adjectives you would use in describing these images. Then write an opening paragraph which establishes the atmosphere you have chosen, including as many of these details and descriptive words as you can.

FOR FURTHER READING: STORIES OF ATMOSPHERE

Michael Arlen	The Gentleman from America
H. E. Bates	The Cloudburst
E. F. Benson	Caterpillars
Ambrose Bierce	The Boarded Window
Algernon Blackwood	The Occupant of the Room
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle	The Horror of the Heights
Charlotte Perkins Stetson Gilman	The Yellow Wallpaper
O. Henry	The Furnished Room
William Hope Hodgson	The Voice in the Night
"Saki" (H. H. Munro)	The Interlopers
	Sredni Vashtar
Alfred Noyes	Midnight Express
Edgar Allan Poe	The Fall of the House of Usher
	The Masque of the Red Death
	The Tell-Tale Heart
H. G. Wells	Pollock and the Porroh Man
	The Sea Raiders

SUPERNATURAL ELEMENTS:

“WILLING SUSPENSION OF DISBELIEF”

IN MANY stories of atmosphere, told primarily to create emotional reactions in the readers, authors do not hesitate to gain their effects by the introduction of *supernatural elements*: angels, devils, ghosts, and the like. Such supernatural elements are on occasion introduced into other kinds of stories, also—sometimes to induce laughter, sometimes to teach moral lessons. Now, some of these supernatural elements (such as angels, or miracles) you may well enough believe in, and be willing to accept; but towards others (such as ghosts, or giants, or witches) your reaction may well be “Oh, that’s impossible!” or “Can you prove it?” or maybe just “Oh, yeah?”

Such a response on your part would mark you as a typical literal-minded, skeptical modern. In the Middle Ages, and even later, people believed in fairies, giants, witches, elves, and ghosts; and stories narrating the antics of these fantastic creatures were readily believed by the great majority. (For example: “Jack the Giant-Killer,” “Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs,” the story of the Holy Grail in the King Arthur legends, and the famous story of Dr. Faustus—who paid for all sorts of supernatural adventures by selling his soul to the devil.) In this modern age of ours, however, where science and exact measurement play so large a part, most people no longer believe in a flesh-and-blood devil, or in ghosts, or fairies, or witches. Consequently, although stories containing such supernatural beings are still being written and read with pleasure by many, the typical modern reader often finds that his enjoyment of such tales is made difficult by his disbelief.

If, then, you are to enjoy stories of this kind, you will have to set aside your natural skepticism, put your scientific doubts to

sleep, and be as willing to play along with the author as you were when in childhood you read the Superman or Mr. Mystic comic strips. If you fail to achieve what a great poet (Coleridge) once called the "willing suspension of disbelief," you will miss the pleasure that lies awaiting you in the story. If, however, you meet the author halfway by forgetting the real world and willingly accepting the supernatural system of things in his story, you will enjoy the story as the author intended.

A SCHOOL STORY

Montague Rhodes James

M. R. James is an acknowledged master of the ghost story. He is considered by many to be as distinguished in this field as Conan Doyle is in that of the detective story. In his ghost stories, the supernatural elements are neither friendly nor amusing, but evil and terrifying—as all proper, self-respecting ghosts should be. In the following story he leaves much to the imagination; but, if you put your imagination into action and don't forget the "willing suspension of disbelief," even so slight a story as this one can be rather terrifying. Of course, really to do justice to this story you should read it when you are at home alone on a dark, stormy night.

Two men in a smoking-room were talking of their private-school days. "At *our* school," said A., "we had a ghost's footmark on the staircase. What was it like? Oh, very unconvincing. Just the shape of a shoe, with a square toe, if I remember right. The staircase was a stone one. I never heard any story about the thing. That seems odd, when you come to think of it. Why didn't somebody invent one, I wonder?"

"You never can tell with little boys. They have a mythology of their own. There's a subject for you, by the way—'The Folklore of Private Schools.'"

"Yes; the crop is rather scanty, though. I imagine, if you were to investigate the cycle of ghost stories, for instance, which the boys at private schools tell each other, they would all turn out to be highly compressed versions of stories out of books."

"Nowadays the *Strand* and *Pearson's*, and so on, would be extensively drawn upon."

"No doubt: they weren't born or thought of in *my* time. Let's see. I wonder if I can remember the staple ones that I was told.

First, there was the house with a room in which a series of people insisted on passing a night; and each of them in the morning was found kneeling in a corner, and had just time to say, 'I've seen it,' and died."

"Wasn't that the house in Berkeley Square?"

"I dare say it was. Then there was the man who heard a noise in the passage at night, opened his door and saw someone crawling towards him on all fours with his eye hanging out on his cheek. There was besides, let me think— Yes! the room where a man was found dead in bed with a horseshoe mark on his forehead, and the floor under the bed was covered with marks of horseshoes also; I don't know why. Also there was the lady who, on locking her bedroom door in a strange house, heard a thin voice among the bed-curtains say, 'Now we're shut in for the night.' None of those had any explanation or sequel. I wonder if they go on still, those stories."

"Oh, likely enough—with additions from the magazines, as I said. You never heard, did you, of a real ghost at a private school? I thought not, nobody has that ever I came across."

"From the way in which you said that, I gather that *you* have."

"I really don't know; but this is what was in my mind. It happened at my private school thirty-odd years ago, and I haven't any explanation of it."

"The school I mean was near London. It was established in a large and fairly old house—a great white building with very fine grounds about it; there were large cedars in the garden, as there are in so many of the older gardens in the Thames valley, and ancient elms in the three or four fields which we used for our games. I think probably it was quite an attractive place, but boys seldom allow that their schools possess any tolerable features."

"I came to the school in a September, soon after the year 1870; and among the boys who arrived on the same day was one whom I took to: a Highland boy, whom I will call McLeod. I needn't spend time in describing him: the main thing is that I got to know him very well. He was not an exceptional boy in any way—not particularly good at books or games—but he suited me."

"The school was a large one: there must have been from 120 to

130 boys there as a rule, and so a considerable staff of masters was required, and there were rather frequent changes among them.

"One term—perhaps it was my third or fourth—a new master made his appearance. His name was Sampson. He was a tallish, stoutish, pale, black-bearded man. I think we liked him: he had travelled a good deal, and had stories which amused us on our school walks, so that there was some competition among us to get within earshot of him. I remember too—dear me, I have hardly thought of it since then!—that he had a charm on his watch-chain that attracted my attention one day, and he let me examine it. It was, I now suppose, a gold Byzantine¹ coin; there was an effigy of some absurd emperor on one side; the other side had been worn practically smooth, and he had had cut on it—rather barbarously—his own initials, G.W.S., and a date, 24 July, 1865. Yes, I can see it now: he told me he had picked it up in Constantinople: it was about the size of a florin,² perhaps rather smaller.

"Well, the first odd thing that happened was this. Sampson was doing Latin grammar with us. One of his favorite methods—perhaps it is rather a good one—was to make us construct sentences out of our own heads to illustrate the rules he was trying to make us learn. Of course that is a thing which gives a silly boy a chance of being impertinent: there are lots of school stories in which that happens—or anyhow there might be. But Sampson was too good a disciplinarian for us to think of trying that on with him. Now, on this occasion he was telling us how to express *remembering* in Latin: and he ordered us each to make a sentence bringing in the verb *memini*, 'I remember.' Well, most of us made up some ordinary sentence such as 'I remember my father,' or 'He remembers his book,' or something equally uninteresting: and I dare say a good many put down *memino librum meum*,³ and so forth: but the boy I mentioned—McLeod—was evidently thinking of something more elaborate than that. The rest of us wanted to have our sentences passed, and get on to something else, so some kicked him under the desk, and I, who was next to him, poked him and

¹ *Byzantine*: pertaining to Byzantium (now Istanbul).

² *florin*: a gold coin, originally made in Florence, Italy

³ *memino librum meum*: very bad Latin for "I remember my book."

whispered to him to look sharp. But he didn't seem to attend. I looked at his paper and saw he had put down nothing at all. So I jogged him again harder than before and upbraided him sharply for keeping us all waiting. That did have some effect. He started and seemed to wake up, and then very quickly he scribbled about a couple of lines on his paper, and showed it up with the rest. As it was the last, or nearly the last, to come in, and as Sampson had a good deal to say to the boys who had written *meminiscimus patri meo* ⁴ and the rest of it, it turned out that the clock struck twelve before he had got to McLeod, and McLeod had to wait afterwards to have his sentence corrected. There was nothing much going on outside when I got out, so I waited for him to come. He came very slowly when he did arrive, and I guessed there had been some sort of trouble. 'Well,' I said, 'what did you get?' 'Oh, I don't know,' said McLeod, 'nothing much: but I think Sampson's rather sick with me.' 'Why, did you show him up some rot?' 'No fear,' he said. 'It was all right as far as I could see: it was like this: *Memento*—that's right enough for remember, and it takes a genitive,—*memento putei inter quatuor taxos*' 'What silly rot!' I said. 'What made you shove that down? What does it mean?' 'That's the funny part,' said McLeod. 'I'm not quite sure what it does mean. All I know is, it just came into my head and I corked it down. I know what I *think* it means, because just before I wrote it down I had a sort of picture of it in my head: I believe it means "Remember the well among the four"—what are those dark sort of trees that have red berries on them?' 'Mountain ashes I s'pose you mean.' 'I never heard of them,' said McLeod; 'no, I'll tell you—yews.' 'Well, and what did Sampson say?' 'Why, he was jolly odd about it. When he read it he got up and went to the mantelpiece and stopped quite a long time without saying anything, with his back to me. And then he said, without turning round, and rather quiet, "What do you suppose that means?" I told him what I thought; only I couldn't remember the name of the silly tree: and then he wanted to know why I put it down, and I had to say something or other. And after that he left off talking about it, and asked me how long I'd been here, and

⁴ *meminiscimus patri meo*: very bad Latin for "I remember my father."

where my people lived, and things like that: and then I came away: but he wasn't looking a bit well.'

"I don't remember any more that was said by either of us about this. Next day McLeod took to his bed with a chill or something of the kind, and it was a week or more before he was in school again. And as much as a month went by without anything happening that was noticeable. Whether or not Mr. Sampson was really startled, as McLeod had thought, he didn't show it. I am pretty sure, of course, now, that there was something very curious in his past history, but I'm not going to pretend that we boys were sharp enough to guess any such thing.

"There was one other incident of the same kind as the last which I told you. Several times since that day we had had to make up examples in school to illustrate different rules, but there had never been any row except when we did them wrong. At last there came a day when we were going through those dismal things which people call Conditional Sentences, and we were told to make a conditional sentence, expressing a future consequence. We did it, right or wrong, and showed up our bits of paper, and Sampson began looking through them. All at once he got up, made some odd sort of noise in his throat, and rushed out by a door that was just by his desk. We sat there for a minute or two, and then—I suppose it was incorrect—but we went up, I and one or two others, to look at the papers on his desk. Of course I thought someone must have put down some nonsense or other, and Sampson had gone off to report him. All the same, I noticed that he hadn't taken any of the papers with him when he ran out. Well, the top paper on the desk was written in red ink—which no one used—and it wasn't in anyone's hand who was in the class. They all looked at it—McLeod and all—and took their dying oaths that it wasn't theirs. Then I thought of counting the bits of paper. And of this I made quite certain: that there were seventeen bits of paper on the desk, and sixteen boys in the form. Well, I bagged the extra paper, and kept it, and I believe I have it now. And now you will want to know what was written on it. It was simple enough, and harmless enough, I should have said.

"Si tu non veneris ad me, ego veniam ad te,"

which means, I suppose, 'If you don't come to me, I'll come to you.' "

"Could you show me the paper?" interrupted the listener.

"Yes, I could: but there's another odd thing about it. That same afternoon I took it out of my locker—I know for certain it was the same bit, for I made a finger-mark on it—and no single trace of writing of any kind was there on it. I kept it, as I said, and since that time I have tried various experiments to see whether sympathetic ink had been used, but absolutely without result.

"So much for that. After about half an hour Sampson looked in again: said he had felt very unwell, and told us we might go. He came rather gingerly to his desk, and gave just one look at the uppermost paper: and I suppose he thought he must have been dreaming: anyhow, he asked no questions.

"That day was a half-holiday, and next day Sampson was in school again, much as usual. That night the third and last incident in my story happened.

"We—McLeod and I—slept in a dormitory at right angles to the main building. Sampson slept in the main building on the first floor. There was a very bright full moon. At an hour which I can't tell exactly, but some time between one and two, I was woken up by somebody shaking me. It was McLeod; and a nice state of mind he seemed to be in. 'Come,' he said,—'come! there's a burglar getting in through Sampson's window.' As soon as I could speak, I said, 'Well, why not call out and wake everybody up?' 'No, no,' he said, 'I'm not sure who it is: don't make a row: come and look.' Naturally I came and looked, and naturally there was no one there. I was cross enough, and should have called McLeod plenty of names: only—I couldn't tell why—it seemed to me that there *was* something wrong—something that made me very glad I wasn't alone to face it. We were still at the window looking out, and as soon as I could, I asked him what he had heard or seen. 'I didn't *hear* anything at all,' he said, 'but about five minutes before I woke you, I found myself looking out of this window here, and there was a man sitting or kneeling on Sampson's window-sill, and looking in, and I thought he was beckoning.' 'What sort of

man?" McLeod wriggled. "I don't know," he said, "but I can tell you one thing—he was beastly thin: and he looked as if he was wet all over: and," he said, looking round and whispering as if he hardly liked to hear himself, "I'm not at all sure that he was alive."

"We went on talking in whispers some time longer, and eventually crept back to bed. No one else in the room woke or stirred the whole time. I believe we did sleep a bit afterwards, but we were very cheap next day.

"And next day Mr. Sampson was gone: not to be found: and I believe no trace of him has ever come to light since. In thinking it over, one of the oddest things about it all has seemed to me to be the fact that neither McLeod nor I ever mentioned what we had seen to any third person whatever. Of course no questions were asked on the subject, and if they had been, I am inclined to believe that we could not have made any answer: we seemed unable to speak about it.

"That is my story," said the narrator. "The only approach to a ghost story connected with a school that I know, but still, I think, an approach to such a thing."

The sequel to this may perhaps be reckoned highly conventional; but a sequel there is, and so it must be produced. There had been more than one listener to the story, and, in the latter part of that same year, or of the next, one such listener was staying at a country house in Ireland.

One evening his host was turning over a drawer full of odds and ends in the smoking-room. Suddenly he put his hand upon a little box. "Now," he said, "you know about old things; tell me what that is." My friend opened the little box, and found in it a thin gold chain with an object attached to it. He glanced at the object and then took off his spectacles to examine it more narrowly. "What's the history of this?" he asked. "Odd enough," was the answer. "You know the yew thicket in the shrubbery: well, a year or two back we were cleaning out the old well that used to be in the clearing here, and what do you suppose we found?"

"Is it possible that you found a body?" said the visitor, with an odd feeling of nervousness.

"We did that: but what's more, in every sense of the word, we found two."

"Good Heavens! Two? Was there anything to show how they got there? Was this thing found with them?"

"It was Amongst the rags of the clothes that were on one of the bodies. A bad business, whatever the story of it may have been. One body had the arms tight round the other. They must have been there thirty years or more—long enough before we came to this place. You may judge we filled the well up fast enough. Do you make anything of what's cut on that gold coin you have there?"

"I think I can," said my friend, holding it to the light (but he read it without much difficulty) ; "it seems to be G.W.S., 24 July, 1865 "

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. What details in this story are definitely supernatural? Which of these were you able to accept? By what means does the author attempt to give the story verisimilitude? What is the reader's responsibility in helping to make the story succeed?

2. Ghost stories are written to produce terror rather than horror. The terror is created by removing the reader from a real world of order and security into an imaginary world of evil supernatural agents. What is the difference between horror and terror?

SOMETHING TO DO

Write out briefly the story of Mr. Sampson's crime—the "something very curious in his past history." Or, write out the story of some other crime which might be the basis of a similar "ghostly" revenge. Keep the details of the action clear and in the right order. Don't get caught saying, "Oh, I forgot to tell you. . . ." Make the story flow smoothly.

FOR FURTHER READING: THE SUPERNATURAL

From <i>Arabian Nights</i>	Aladdin and His Wonderful Lamp
F. Marion Crawford	The Upper Berth
Théophile Gautier	The Mummy's Foot
Stephen Grendon	A Gentleman from Prague

L. P. Hartley	.... .	A Visitor from Down Under
W. F. Harvey	. . . . .	August Heat
DuBose Heyward	.... .	The Half-Pint Flask
Washington Irving	. . . . .	The Adventure of the German Student
W. W. Jacobs	.... .	The Monkey's Paw
M. R. James	.....	Casting the Runes
		Oh, Whistle, and I'll Come to You, My Lad
Guy de Maupassant	... ..	The Horla
H. G. Wells	. . . . .	The Inexperienced Ghost
		The Man Who Could Work Miracles
Edith Wharton	.....	The Triumph of Night

READING FOR FUN PLUS

REALISM OF SETTING

MANY stories are written to give an accurate picture of life as it is actually lived at some given place and time. Such stories are examples of *realism*, and add to our knowledge of the customs and habits of the many different kinds of places and people that go to make up this interesting world of ours. Realistic fiction is somewhat the same as travel: it takes us to real places and shows us typical people and typical life in these various localities.

In giving us a realistic picture of a given locality, the author will call our attention to the special features of the place: the topography, the buildings, the vegetation, the weather, the colors. He will show us the people who live there: their appearance, their clothing, their manners and customs. Finally, he will let us hear them speak, and if they speak queerly, he will reproduce their dialect. All these details together re-create for us a bit of life—not a dream world of adventure and romance, but real life as it actually exists at this particular place. Knowledge of locale is one of the values that come along with the fun of reading fiction. Readers of modern American literature, especially, have learned to love the color and character of the varied American landscape and its life, which our authors cherish and hope to preserve in legend and story. Their attempts to record in words the special character of life in various parts of our country are sometimes called regional literature.

GOIN' TO TOWN

Wallace Stegner

"Goin' to Town" is an example of regional realism. It is an episode of life on the western prairies that lie against the mountains of the Great Divide. To be sure, it gives only a glimpse, not a complete picture; but because it is done with honest accuracy, you get a vividly convincing reflection of that life. If you know that upland prairie country, you will recognize the faithfulness of Mr. Stegner's record; if not, accept it as a trustworthy picture. To appreciate the realism of the setting means to experience in imagination all the details: to feel the soft wet earth under foot, to see the dim line of mountains to the south, to endure the heat bearing down from the cloudless sky, to smell the gasoline and the sweating horses—to sense the quality of that upland farm life.

But to read the story properly means not only to be aware of all the details of time and place, but also to hear the sharp words of the father, to feel as your own the boy's longing and the bitterness of his disappointment—in short, to experience for yourself the episode here recorded.

I

AFTER the night's rain the yard was spongy and soft under the boy's bare feet. He stood at the edge of the packed dooryard in the flat thrust of sunrise looking at the ground washed clean and smooth and trackless, feeling the cool firm mud under his toes. Experimentally he lifted his right foot and put it down in a new place, pressed, picked it up again to look at the neat imprint of straight edge and curving instep and the five round dots of toes. The air was so fresh that he sniffed at it as he would have sniffed at the smell of cinnamon.

Lifting his head backward, he saw how the prairie beyond the fireguard looked darker than in dry times, healthier with green-brown tints, smaller and more intimate somehow than it did when the heat waves crawled over scorched grass and carried the horizons backward into dim and unseeable distances. And standing in the yard above his one clean sharp footprint, feeling his own verticality in all that spread of horizontal land, he sensed how the prairie shrank on this morning and how he himself grew. He was immense. A little jump would crack his head on the sky; a few strides would take him to any horizon.

His eyes turned south, into the low south sky, cloudless, almost colorless in the strong light. Just above the brown line of the horizon, faint as a watermark on pale blue paper, was the wavering tracery of the mountains, tenuous and far-off, but today accessible for the first time. His mind had played among those ghostly summits for uncountable lost hours; today, in a few strides, they were his. And more: under the shadow of those peaks, under those Bearpaws that he and his mother privately called the Mountains of the Moon, was Chinook; and in Chinook, on this Fourth of July, were the band, the lemonade stands, the crowds, the parade, the ball game, the fireworks, that his mind had hungered toward in anticipation for three weeks.

His shepherd pup lay watching, belly down on the damp ground. In a gleeful spasm the boy stooped down to flap the pup's ears, then bent and spun like an Indian in a war dance while the wide-mouthed dog raced around him. And when his father came to the door in his undershirt, yawning, running a hand up the back of his head and through his hair, peering out from gummed eyes to see how the weather looked, the boy watched him, and his voice was one deep breathing relief from yesterday's rainy fear.

"It's clear as a bell," he said.

His father yawned again, clopped his jaws, rubbed his eyes, mumbled something from a mouth furry with sleep. He stood on the doorstep scratching himself comfortably, looking down at the boy and the dog.

"Gonna be hot," he said slyly. "Might be too hot to drive."

"Aw, Pa!"

"Gonna be a scorcher. Melt you right down to axle grease riding in that car."

The boy regarded him doubtfully, saw the lurking sly droop of his mouth. "Aw, we are too going!"

At his father's laugh he burst from his immobility like a sprinter starting, raced one complete circle of the house with the dog after him. When he flew around past his father again his voice trailed out behind him at the corner of the house. "Gonna feed the hens," he said. His father looked after him, scratched himself, laughed suddenly, and went back indoors.

II

Through chores and breakfast the boy moved with the dream of a day's rapture haunting his eyes, but that did not keep him from swift and agile helpfulness. He didn't even wait for commands. He scrubbed himself twice, slicked down his hair, hunted up clean clothes, wiped the mud from his shoes with a wet rag and put them on. While his mother packed the shoebox of lunch he stood at her elbows proffering aid. He flew to stow things in the topless old Ford. He got a cloth and polished the brass radiator. Once or twice, jumping around to help, he looked up to catch his parents watching him, or looking at each other with the knowing, smiling expression in the eyes that said they were calling each other's attention to him.

"Just like a race horse," his father said once, and the boy felt foolish, swaggered, twisted his mouth down in a leer, said "Awww!" But in a moment he was hustling them again. They ought to get going, with fifty miles to drive. And long before they were ready he was standing beside the Ford, licked and immaculate and so excited that his feet jumped him up and down without his volition or knowledge.

It was eight o'clock before his father came out, lifted off the front seat, poked the flat stick down into the gas tank, and pulled it out again dripping. "Pretty near full," he said. "If we're gonna drive up to the mountains we better take a can along, though. Fill that two-gallon one with the spout."

The boy ran, dug the can out of the shed, filled it from the spigot

of the sixty-gallon drum that stood on a plank support to the north of the farmhouse. When he came back, his left arm stuck straight out and the can knocking against his legs, his mother was settling herself into the back seat among the parcels and water bags.

"Goodness!" she said. "This is the first time I've been the first ready since I don't know when. I should think you'd have got all this done last night."

"Plenty time." The father stood looking down at the boy, grinning. "All right, race horse. You want to go to this shindig, you better hop in."

The boy was up into the front seat like a squirrel. His father walked around in front of the car. "Okay," he said. "You look sharp now. When she kicks over, switch her onto magneto and pull the spark down."

The boy said nothing. He looked upon the car, as his father did, with respect and a little awe. They didn't use it much, and starting it was a ritual like a fire drill. The father unscrewed the four-eared brass plug, looked down into the radiator, screwed the cap back on, and bent to take hold of the crank. "Watch it now," he said.

The boy felt the gentle heave of the springs, up and down, as his father wound the crank. He heard the gentle hiss in the bowels of the engine as the choke wire was pulled out, and his nostrils filled with the strong, volatile odor of gasoline. Over the slope of the radiator his father's brown strained face lifted up. "Is she turned on all right?"

"Yup. She's on battery."

"Must of flooded her. Have to let her rest a minute."

They waited—and then after a few minutes the wavelike heaving of the springs again, the rise and fall of the blue shirt and bent head over the radiator, the sighing swish of the choke, a stronger smell of gasoline. The motor had not even coughed

The two voices came simultaneously from the car. "What's the matter with it?"

His brow puckered in an intent and serious scowl, the father stood blowing mighty breaths. "Son of a gun," he said. Coming

around, he pulled at the switch to make sure it was clear over, adjusted the spark and gas levers. A fine mist of sweat made his face shine like oiled leather in the sun.

"There isn't anything really wrong with it, is there?" the mother said, and her voice wavered uncertainly on the edge of fear.

"I don't see how there could be," he said. "She's always started right off, and she was running all right when I drove her in here."

The boy looked at his mother where she sat erect and stiff among the things in the seat. She looked all dressed up, a flowered dress, a hat with hard red varnished cherries on it pinned to her red hair. For a moment she sat, stiff and nervous. "What'll you have to do?" she said.

"I don't know. Look into the motor."

"Well, I guess I'll get in out of the sun while you do it," she said, and, opening the door, she fumbled her way out of the clutter.

The boy felt her exodus like a surrender, a betrayal. If they didn't hurry up they'd miss the parade. In one motion he bounced out of the car. "Gee whiz!" he said. "Let's do something. We got to get started."

"Keep your shirt on," his father grunted. Lifting the hood, he bent his head inside, studying the engine. His hand went out to test wires, wiggle spark-plug connections, make tentative pulls at the choke. The weakly hinged hood slipped and came down across his wrist, and he swore, pushing it back. "Get me the pliers," he said.

For ten minutes he probed and monkeyed. "Might be the spark plugs," he said. "She don't seem to be getting any fire through her."

The mother, sitting on a box in the shade, smoothed her flowered voile dress nervously. "Will it take long?"

"Half hour."

"Any day but this!" she said. "I don't see why you didn't make sure last night."

He breathed through his nose and bent over the engine again. "Don't go laying on any blame," he said. "It was raining last night."

One by one the plugs came out, were squinted at, scraped with a

knife blade, the gap tested with a thin dime. The boy stood on one foot, then on the other, time pouring like a flood of uncatchable silver dollars through his hands. He kept looking at the sun, estimating how much time there was left. If they got it started right away they might still make it for the parade, but it would be close. Maybe they'd drive right up the street while the parade was on, and be part of it. . . .

"Is she ready?" he said.

"Pretty quick."

He wandered over by his mother, and she reached out and put an arm around his shoulders, hugging him quickly. "Well, anyway we'll get there for the band and the ball game and the fireworks," he said. "If she doesn't start till noon we c'n make it for those."

"Sure," she said. "Pa'll get it going in a minute. We won't miss anything, hardly."

"You ever seen skyrockets, Ma?"

"Once."

"Are they fun?"

"Wonderful," she said. "Just like a million stars, all colors, exploding all at once."

His feet took him back to his father, who straightened up with a belligerent grunt. "Now!" he said. "If the sucker doesn't start now . . ."

And once more the heaving of the springs, the groaning of the turning engine, the hiss of choke. He tried short, sharp half-turns, as if to catch the motor off guard. Then he went back to the stubborn laboring spin. The back of his blue shirt was stained darkly, the curving dikes of muscle along the spine's hollow showing cleanly where the cloth stuck. Over and over, heaving, stubborn at first, then furious, until he staggered back panting.

"Damn!" he said. "What you suppose is the matter with the fool thing?"

"She didn't even cough once," the boy said, and, staring up at his father's face full of angry bafflement, he felt the cold fear touch him. What if it didn't start at all? What if they never got to any of it? What if, all ready to go, they had to turn around and

unload the Ford and not even get out of the yard? His mother came over and they stood close together, looking at the Ford and avoiding each other's eyes.

"Maybe something got wet last night," she said.

"Well, it's had plenty time to dry out," said his father.

"Isn't there anything else you could try?"

"We can jack up the hind wheel, I guess. But there's no reason we ought to have to."

"Well, if you have to, you'll have to," she said briskly. "After planning it for three weeks we can't just get stuck like this. Can we, son?"

His answer was mechanical, his eyes steady on his father. "Sure not," he said.

The father opened his mouth to say something, saw the boy's lugubrious face, and shut his lips again. Without a word he pulled off the seat and got out the jack.

The sun climbed steadily while they jacked up one hind wheel and blocked the car carefully so that it wouldn't run over anybody when it started. The boy helped, and when they were ready again he sat in the front seat so full of hope and fear that his whole body was one taut concentration. His father stooped, his cheek pressed against the radiator as a milker's cheek touches the flank of a cow. His shoulder dropped, jerked up. Nothing. Another jerk. Nothing. Then he was rolling in a furious spasm of energy, the wet dark back of his shirt rising and falling. And inside the motor only the futile swish of the choke and the half-sound, half-feel of cavernous motion as the crankshaft turned over. The Ford bounced on its springs as if the front wheels were coming off the ground on every upstroke. Then it stopped, and the boy's father was hanging on the radiator, breathless, dripping wet, swearing: "Son of a dirty, lousy, stinking, corrupted . . ."

The boy, his eyes dark, stared from his father's angry wet face to his mother's, pinched with worry. The pup lay down in the shade and put his head on his paws. "Gee whiz," the boy said. "Gee whiz!" He looked at the sky, and the morning was half gone.

His shoulders jerking with anger, the father threw the crank

halfway across the yard and took a step or two toward the house

"Harry, you can't!"

He stopped, glared at her, took an oblique look at the boy, bared his teeth in an irresolute, silent swearword. "Well, if it won't go!"

"Maybe if you hitched the horses to it," she said.

His laugh was short and choppy. "That'd be fine!" he said. "Why don't we just hitch up and let the team haul this damned old boat into Chinook?"

"But we've got to get it started! Why wouldn't it be all right to let them pull it around? You push it sometimes on a hill and it starts."

He looked at the boy again, jerked his eyes away with an exasperated gesture, as if he held the boy somehow accountable. The boy stared, mournful, defeated, ready to cry, and his father's head swung back unwillingly. Then abruptly he winked, mopped his head and neck, and grinned. "Think you want to go, uh?"

The boy nodded. "All right!" his father's voice snapped crisply. "Fly up in the pasture and get the team. Hustle!"

III

On the high lope the boy was off up the coulee bank. Just down under the lip of the swale, a quarter mile west, the bay backs of the horses and the black dot of the colt showed. Usually he ran circumspectly across that pasture, because of the cactus, but now he flew. With shoes it was all right, and even without shoes he would have run—across burnouts, over stretches so undermined with gopher holes that sometimes he broke through to the ankle, staggering. Skimming over patches of cactus, soaring over a badger hole, plunging down into the coulee and up the other side, he ran as if bears were after him. The black colt, spotting him, hoisted his tail and took off in a spectacular, stiff-legged sprint across the flats, but the bays merely lifted their heads to watch him. He slowed, came up walking, laid a hand on the mare's neck and untied the looped halter rope. She stood for him while he scrambled and wriggled and kicked his way to her back, and then they were off, the mare in an easy lope, the gelding trotting after,

the colt stopping his wild showoff career and wobbling hastily and ignominiously after his departing mother.

They pulled up before the Ford, the boy sliding off to throw the halter rope to his father. "Shall I get the harness?" he said, and before anyone could answer he was off running, to come back lugging one heavy harness, tugs trailing little furrows in the damp bare earth. He dropped it, turned to run again, his breath laboring in his lungs. "I'll get the other'n," he said.

With a short, almost incredulous laugh his father looked at his mother and shook his head before he threw the harness on the mare. When the second one came he laid it over the gelding, pushed against the heavy shoulder to get the horse into place. The gelding resisted, pranced a little, got a curse and a crack with the rope across his nose, jerked back and trembled and lifted his feet nervously, and set one shod hoof on his owner's instep. The father, unstrung by the hurry and the heat and the labor and the exasperation of a morning when nothing went right, kicked the horse savagely in the belly. "Get in there, you big blundering ox! Back! Whoa! Whoa, now!"

With a heavy rope for a towline he hitched the now-skittish team to the axle. Without a word he stooped and lifted the boy to the mare's back. "All right," he said, and his face relaxed in a quick grin. "This is where we start her. Ride 'em around in a circle, not too fast."

Then he climbed into the Ford, turned on the switch to magneto, fussed with the levers. "Let her go!" he said.

The boy kicked the mare ahead, twisting as he rode to watch the Ford heave forward as a tired, heavy man heaves to his feet, begin rolling after him, lurching on the uneven ground, jerking and kicking and making growling noises when his father let the emergency brake off and put it in gear. The horses settled as the added pull came on them, flattened into their collars, swung in a circle, bumped each other, skittered. The mare reared, and the boy shut his eyes and clung. When he came down, her leg was entangled in the towline and his father was climbing cursing out of the Ford to straighten it out. His father was mad again, and yelled at him.

"Keep 'em apart! There ain't any tongue or trees. You got to keep Dick kicked over on his own side."

And again the start, the flattening into the collars, the snapping tight of the tugs under his legs. This time it went smoothly, the Ford galloped after the team in lumbering, plunging jerks. The mare's eyes rolled white, and she broke into a trot, pulling the gelding after her. Desperately the boy clung to the knotted and shortened reins, his ears alert for the grumble of the Ford starting behind him. The pup ran beside the team yapping in a high, falsetto, idiot monotone, crazy with excitement.

They made three complete circles of the back yard between house and chicken coop before the boy looked back again. "Won't she start?" he shouted. He saw his father rigid behind the wheel, heard his ripping burst of swearwords, saw him bend and glare down into the mysterious inwards of the engine through the pulled-up floorboards. Guiding the car with one hand, he fumbled down below, one glaring eye just visible over the cowl.

"Shall I stop?" the boy shouted. Excitement and near-despair made his voice a tearful scream. But his father's wild arm waved him on. "Go on, go on! Gallop 'em! Pull the guts out of this thing. Run 'em, run 'em!"

And the galloping—the furious, mud-flinging, rolling-eyed galloping around the circle already rutted like a road, the Ford, now in savagely held low, growling and surging and ploughing behind; the mad yapping of the dog, the erratic scared bursts of runaway from the colt, the mother in sight briefly for a quarter of each circle, her hands to her mouth and her eyes hurt, and behind him in the Ford his father in a strangling rage, yelling him on, his lips back over his teeth and his face purple.

Until finally they stopped, the horses blown, the boy white and tearful and still, the father dangerous with unexpended wrath. The boy slipped off, his lip bitten between his teeth, not crying now but ready to at any moment, the corners of his eyes prickling with it, and his teeth tight on his misery. His father climbed over the side of the car and stood looking as if he wanted to tear the thing apart with his bare hands.

IV

Shoulders sagging, tears trembling to fall, his jaw aching with the need to cry, the boy started toward his mother. As he came near his father he looked up, their eyes met, and he saw his father's blank with impotent rage. Dull hopelessness swallowed him. Not any of it, his mind said. Not even any of it—no parade, no ball game, no band, no fireworks. No lemonade or ice cream or paper horns or firecrackers. No close sight of the mountains that throughout every summer called like a legend from his horizons. No trip, no adventure—none of it, nothing.

Everything he was feeling was in that one still look. In spite of him his lip trembled, and he choked off a sob, his eyes on his father's face, on the brows pulling down and the eyes narrowing.

"Well, don't blubber!" his father shouted at him. "Don't stand there looking at me as if it was me that was keeping you from your picnic!"

"I can't—help it," the boy said, and with a kind of terror he felt the grief swelling up, overwhelming him, driving the voice out of him in a wail. Through the blur of his crying he saw the convulsive tightening of his father's face, and then all the fury of a maddening morning concentrated itself in a swift backhand blow that knocked the boy staggering.

He bawled aloud, from pain, from surprise, from outrage, from pure desolation, and ran to bury his face in his mother's skirts. From that muffled sanctuary he heard her angry voice. "No," she said. "It won't do any good to try to make up to him now. Go on away somewhere till he gets over it."

She rocked him against her, but the voice she had for his father was still bitter with anger. "As if he wasn't hurt enough already!" she said.

He heard the heavy, quick footsteps going away, and for a long time he lay crying into the voile flowers. And when he had cried himself out, and had listened apathetically to his mother's soothing promises that they would go in the first chance they got, go to the mountains, have a picnic under some waterfall, maybe be able to find a ball game going on in town, some Saturday—when he had

listened and become quiet, wanting to believe it but not believing it at all, he went inside to take off his good clothes and his shoes and put on his old overalls again.

It was almost noon when he came out to stand in the front yard looking southward toward the impossible land where the Mountains of the Moon lifted above the plains, and where, in the town at the foot of the peaks, crowds would now be eating picnic lunches, drinking pop, getting ready to go out to the ball field and watch heroes in real uniforms play ball. The band would be braying now from a bunting-wrapped stand, kids would be tossing fire-crackers, playing in a cool grove. . . .

In the still heat his face went sorrowful and defeated, and his eyes searched the horizon for the telltale watermark. But there was nothing but waves of heat crawling and lifting like invisible flames; the horizon was a blurred and writhing flatness where earth and sky met in an indistinct band of haze. This morning two strides would have taken him there; now it was gone.

Looking down, he saw at his feet the clean footprint that he had made in the early morning. Aimlessly he put his right foot down and pressed. The mud was drying, but in a low place he found a spot that would still take an imprint. Very carefully, as if he were performing some ritual for his life, he went around, stepping and leaning, stepping and leaning, until he had a circle six feet in diameter of delicately exact footprints, straight edge and curving instep and the five round dots of toes.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. List the details that the author used to make the scene seem real. How many of these did you actually visualize as you read? What do you lose if you fail to visualize? How can you train yourself to visualize setting and action?

2. The father's attempts to start the car may raise some technical points. If there is a mechanic in the class, ask him to explain them, especially this sentence: "When she kicks over, switch her onto magneto and pull the spark down."

3. By what means can you find out whether a story which seems realistic is true to the life it attempts to portray? Name two writers other than Stegner whose writing you can be sure will be realistic.

4. Not all stories are realistic, as this one is. In many stories the author is more concerned with excitement and suspense than he is with presenting a picture of life that is typical. Stories that color life, that make it seem more exciting, more strange, more evil, or more noble than in common experience, are called romances. They are good entertainment, and often they teach us important truths about life and people. But romances do not give us a clear picture of real life and of real people as they normally go about their business. Why is it important to know whether a story or a movie is intended as mere entertaining romance or as genuine realism? Tell some false notions about places and people that you got from romantic fiction. How did you find out they were false?

5. Why do most movies color and glamorize life rather than present realistic pictures of life? Discuss some of the recent movies from this point of view.

6. Use the dictionary for: fireguard, verticality, tenuous, immobility, proffering, immaculate, volition, spigot, shindig, volatile, exodus, voile, belligerent, lugubrious, cavernous, oblique, irresolute, lope, coulee, swale, gelding, ignominiously, incredulous, skittish, falsetto, erratic, impotent, convulsive, sanctuary, apathetically, braying.

SOMETHING TO DO

1. Mention a movie which you have seen recently, and tell the class what you learned from it about the locality in which the story took place. Give specific realistic details.

2. Write a paragraph of realistic description. Inject as many local details as you can. Try to make the details add up to a picture that is typical. Suggested subjects: your room at home, a study hall, the soda fountain at the corner drugstore, the beach at a summer camp.

FOR FURTHER READING: REALISM OF SETTING

H. E. Bates	The Cloudburst
T. O. Beachcroft	The Erne from the Coast
Walter van Tilburg Clark	The Buck in the Hills
Stephen Crane	The Open Boat
David Cornel DeJong	Calves
R. P. Harriss	Red Coat Day
Lu Hsin	Peking Street Scene
George Milburn	A Student of Economics
Ross Santee	Water

GOIN' TO TOWN

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James Street	The Biscuit Eater
Jesse Stuart	Split Cherry Tree
	Wild Plums
Ruth Suckow	A Start in Life
Christine Weston	The Mud Horse
Frances Gilchrist Wood	Turkey Red

NATURALISM: THE BITTER TRUTH

MUCH of our modern American fiction has turned in the direction of *naturalism*. And unless a reader knows what naturalism is, he may not be able to understand the author's purpose in a "naturalistic" story. It thus becomes important for you to know what naturalism means.

The naturalist and the realist are alike in that both aim to show literally and accurately what they see in the world about them. Both say that their guiding principle is "to see life clearly and see it whole." But the naturalist accuses the realist of failing to live up to this principle in his writing. Either his observation is at fault—he does not see the truth whole; or his honesty is open to doubt—he distorts the truth he sees. The realist's squeamishness, or "good taste," or desire to present a more "orderly" world than experience reveals, causes him to omit many of the unpleasant and horrible aspects of life. In a word, the naturalist believes himself to be *more* realistic than the realist, because he shows *all* the elements of life, whereas the realist exercises the privilege of selection.

The naturalistic writer, then, claims that he corrects the distortions, the incomplete pictures, of the realist. But the fact is that because of his concern with the omissions of the realist he presents a distorted picture himself. In correcting these omissions, he also tends to show only a part of the truth: he emphasizes the elements in man which make him like the animal. Thus he is apt to ignore the higher spiritual and intellectual qualities of human experience and to show life as made up of disease, pain, dirt, cruelty, horror, and death, with man as their helpless victim. The unselfishness, the beauty, the dreams, the hope of heaven—for the most part these are missing from his work.

Yet, in justice to him, we should remember that all this is the natural result of his attempt to correct the errors of other writers.

So when you read a naturalistic story, do not suppose that the bloody scenes, the sickening stench, or the beastly conduct are there because the author revels in them. They are there because he has seen them in life and believes that courage and honesty require an author to set down what he has seen, without reserve. Do not courage and honesty require of the reader that he, too, acknowledge the unpleasant truths of life, as well as the pleasant?

THE UPTURNED FACE

Stephen Crane

The story which I give you here is a sample of naturalism. Stephen Crane seems to be saying, "You think my story is revolting? Well, that isn't my fault. I tell you the truth about war. Do you find the picture revolting? Does war shock you? It shocks me too. But my job is to tell you the truth; and I won't shirk my job."

"WHAT will we do now?" said the adjutant, troubled and excited.

"Bury him," said Timothy Lean.

The two officers looked down close to their toes where lay the body of their comrade. The face was chalk-blue; gleaming eyes stared at the sky. Over the two upright figures was a windy sound of bullets, and on the top of the hill Lean's prostrate company of Spitzbergen infantry was firing measured volleys.

"Don't you think it would be better . . ." began the adjutant. "We might leave him until tomorrow."

"No," said Lean. "I can't hold that post an hour longer. I've got to fall back, and we've got to bury old Bill."

"Of course," said the adjutant, at once. "Your men got entrenching tools?"

Lean shouted back to his little line, and two men came slowly, one with a pick, one with a shovel. They started in the direction of the Rostina sharpshooters. Bullets cracked near their ears. "Dig here," said Lean gruffly. The men, thus caused to lower their glances to the turf, became hurried and frightened, merely because they could not look to see whence the bullets came. The dull beat of the pick striking the earth sounded amid the swift snap of close bullets. Presently the other private began to shovel.

"I suppose," said the adjutant, slowly, "we'd better search his clothes for—things."

Lean nodded. Together in curious abstraction they looked at the body. Then Lean stirred his shoulders suddenly, arousing himself.

"Yes," he said, "we'd better see what he's got." He dropped to his knees, and his hands approached the body of the dead officer. But his hands wavered over the buttons of the tunic. The first button was brick-red with drying blood, and he did not seem to dare touch it.

"Go on," said the adjutant, hoarsely.

Lean stretched his wooden hand, and his fingers fumbled the blood-stained buttons. At last he rose with ghastly face. He had gathered a watch, a whistle, a pipe, a tobacco-pouch, a handkerchief, a little case of cards and papers. He looked at the adjutant. There was a silence. The adjutant was feeling that he had been a coward to make Lean do all the grisly business.

"Well," said Lean, "that's all, I think. You have his sword and revolver?"

"Yes," said the adjutant, his face working, and then he burst out in a sudden strange fury at the two privates. "Why don't you hurry up with that grave? What are you doing, anyhow? Hurry, do you hear? I never saw such stupid . . ."

Even as he cried out in his passion the two men were laboring for their lives. Ever overhead the bullets were spitting.

The grave was finished. It was not a masterpiece—a poor little shallow thing. Lean and the adjutant again looked at each other in a curious silent communication.

Suddenly the adjutant croaked out a weird laugh. It was a terrible laugh, which had its origin in that part of the mind which is first moved by the singing of the nerves. "Well," he said humorously to Lean, "I suppose we had best tumble him in."

"Yes," said Lean. The two privates stood waiting, bent over their implements. "I suppose," said Lean, "it would be better if we laid him in ourselves."

"Yes," said the adjutant. Then, apparently remembering that he had made Lean search the body, he stooped with great fortitude and took hold of the dead officer's clothing. Lean joined him. Both were particular that their fingers should not feel the corpse.

They tugged away, the corpse lifted, heaved, toppled, flopped into the grave, and the two officers, straightening, looked again at each other—they were always looking at each other. They sighed with relief.

The adjutant said, "I suppose we should—we should say something. Do you know the service, Tim?"

"They don't read the service until the grave is filled in," said Lean, pressing his lips to an academic expression.

"Don't they?" said the adjutant, shocked that he had made the mistake. "Oh, well," he cried, suddenly, "let us—let us say something—while he can hear us."

"All right," said Lean. "Do you know the service?"

"I can't remember a line of it," said the adjutant.

Lean was extremely dubious. "I can repeat two lines, but . . ."

"Well, do it," said the adjutant. "Go as far as you can. That's better than nothing. And the beasts have got our range exactly."

Lean looked at his two men. "Attention," he barked. The privates came to attention with a click, looking much aggrieved. The adjutant lowered his helmet to his knee. Lean, bareheaded, stood over the grave. The Rostina sharpshooters fired briskly.

"O Father, our friend has sunk in the deep waters of death, but his spirit has leaped toward Thee as the bubble arises from the lips of the drowning. Perceive, we beseech, O Father, the little flying bubble, and . . ."

Lean, although husky and ashamed, had suffered no hesitation up to this point, but he stopped with a hopeless feeling and looked at the corpse.

The adjutant moved uneasily. "And from Thy superb heights . . ." he began, and then he too came to an end.

"And from Thy superb heights," said Lean.

The adjutant suddenly remembered a phrase in the back part of the Spitzbergen burial service, and he exploited it with the triumphant manner of a man who has recalled everything, and can go on.

"O God, have mercy. . . ."

"O God, have mercy . . ." said Lean.

"Mercy," repeated the adjutant, in quick failure.

"Mercy," said Lean. And then he was moved by some violence

of feeling, for he turned suddenly upon his two men and tigerishly said, "Throw the dirt in."

The fire of the Rostina sharpshooters was accurate and continuous.

One of the aggrieved privates came forward with his shovel. He lifted his first shovel-load of earth, and for a moment of inexplicable hesitation it was held poised above this corpse, which from its chalk-blue face looked keenly out from the grave. Then the soldier emptied his shovel on—on the feet.

Timothy Lean felt as if tons had been swiftly lifted from off his forehead. He had felt that perhaps the private might empty the shovel on—the face. It had been emptied on the feet. There was a great point gained there—ha, ha!—the first shovelful had been emptied on the feet. How satisfactory!

The adjutant began to babble. "Well, of course—a man we've messed with all these years—impossible—you can't, you know, leave your intimate friends rotting on the field. Go on, for God's sake, and shovel, you."

The man with the shovel suddenly ducked, grabbed his left arm with his right hand, and looked at his officer for orders. Lean picked the shovel from the ground. "Go to the rear," he said to the wounded man. He also addressed the other private. "You get under cover, too; I'll finish this business."

The wounded man scrambled hard still for the top of the ridge without devoting any glances to the direction from whence the bullets came, and the other man followed at an equal pace; but he was different, in that he looked back anxiously three times.

This is merely the way—often—of the hit and unhit.

Timothy Lean filled the shovel, hesitated, and then, in a movement which was like a gesture of abhorrence, he flung the dirt into the grave, and as it landed it made a sound—plop. Lean suddenly stopped and mopped his brow—a tired laborer.

"Perhaps we have been wrong," said the adjutant. His glance wavered stupidly. "It might have been better if we hadn't buried him just at this time. Of course, if we advance tomorrow the body would have been . . ."

"Damn you," said Lean, "shut your mouth." He was not the senior officer.

He again filled the shovel and flung the earth. Always the earth made that sound—plop. For a space Lean worked frantically, like a man digging himself out of danger.

Soon there was nothing to be seen but the chalk-blue face. Lean filled the shovel. "Good God," he cried to the adjutant. "Why didn't you turn him somehow when you put him in? This . . ." Then Lean began to stutter.

The adjutant understood. He was pale to the lips. "Go on, man," he cried, beseechingly, almost in a shout.

Lean swung back the shovel. It went forward in a pendulum curve. When the earth landed it made a sound—plop.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Since the purpose of this story is to picture the horror of war, the author naturally gives many horrible details. List several, like "The face was chalk-blue."
2. What sound serves as an accompaniment to the grim business at hand? Does it add to, or detract from, the horror?
3. Were you offended by the repulsive sights and sounds in this story? Many people consider such gruesome details offensive, and accuse the naturalists of bad taste for including them. Some of these critics are more energetic in condemning the bad taste of the authors than in condemning the horrors of war itself. Do the readers who never lift a voice or a finger against the evils of society or the wretchedness of human life have a right to condemn writers for bringing those evils and that wretchedness to their attention?
4. Use the dictionary for: adjutant, abstraction, exploited, abhorrence.

SOMETHING TO DO

Think of three different situations that would be good basic material for a naturalistic story. Describe each one in a single sentence, as in the following examples:

- (a) When a ramshackle dwelling in a slum district burns, killing two small children, the police discover that the children had been left alone every day by their mother, who worked in a nearby factory.

(b) Jim, who wants to go to town on the Fourth of July, is forced by his cruel uncle, with whom he lives, to help him slaughter a pig.

FOR FURTHER READING: NATURALISM

Ambrose Bierce	.....	..	The Affair at Coulter's Gap An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge
Susan Glaspell	.....	. . .	A Jury of Her Peers
Ernest Hemingway	...	. . .	Fifty Grand The Killers
Jack London	...	. .	Love of Life
Albert Maltz	...	. .	The Happiest Man on Earth
Octave Mirbeau	.....	. . . .	Useless Mouths
Arthur Morrison	.....	...	Without Visible Means
John Steinbeck	.....	.....	The Gift

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

RESTORING THE PAST

MANY pieces of fiction, both long and short, supplement history by presenting, in story form, the typical life of the past, or significant historical incidents. Just as a portrait is often truer to character than a photograph, so in the hands of a good writer, fiction may speak with greater truth about a given historical period than the historical record itself. For the historical record often tells only what men did; but fiction attempts to tell also what they thought and felt. It gives us a *historical background* by presenting to us the customs, actions, thoughts, and feelings of men who lived in the days that have gone by.

The world of today developed out of the world of yesterday, and we can understand the world of our living present only by acquiring insight into the vanished world of the past. In the light of this need, historical fiction, by *restoring the past*, performs for us an invaluable service.

THE BOOKMAN

Howard Fast

Howard Fast has been called "one of America's most important historical novelists," who "always penetrates to the heart of our history." In his book of short stories, *Patrick Henry and the Frigate's Keel*, one finds the same ability to create truthful historical background that distinguishes his longer works of fiction. From this book I have selected a story which I think presents vividly some of the conditions which existed at the time of the American Revolution.

WE were very poor, but we were never so poor as the soldiers. Before the war, it had been different, but as the war went on, we got poorer and poorer, yet we were never so poor as the soldiers.

I think it was in the fall of seventeen eighty that the soldiers were all encamped down in the valley beyond our house. It was just at the beginning of the winter, and the day they came, a film of snow covered the whole valley down to the river, which you could see from our house. Our house stood on a hill, commanding the valley and the river and the plain beyond it. Mother always watched the valley. She said that when father came back, we should see him riding up the valley all the way from the river. Father was with the Third Continentals, a captain. But this was before he was killed.

The soldiers came marching down the river-side, along the dirt road, and they turned up the valley, where they prepared to encamp. They were part of the New Jersey line, all of them very tired-looking men, and very thin. We ran down to meet them, and they all waved to us. I was ashamed of myself, I was so fat and healthy.

An officer on a horse was riding in front, an aide a little way be-

hind him. When he saw me, he cantered over, drawing up his horse close beside me, and leaning over the pommel.

"Hello there, sonny," he said

I didn't say anything, because I thought that maybe he would be thinking of how fat I was, he being so thin. His uniform was all torn and dirty, and his cocked hat flapped wearily. But I liked his face. It was hard and thin, but it had small, dancing blue eyes.

However, I didn't want him to think me entirely a dunce, and I saluted him smartly.

"Well, well," he smiled, "you've the makings, haven't you, sir? And how old might you be?"

"I'm ten, sir."

"And what might be your name?"

"Bently Corbatt, sir."

"And I suppose you live in the big house on the hill? Is this your sister?"

"Yes, sir," I replied, a little ashamed because Ann was so small. "But I've got another, sir."

"Another house?" he questioned, still smiling.

"No, sir. Another sister, who's much bigger than Ann here. And won't you come up to the house, sir?"

"Well—you're not Tories, then?"

"Oh, no, sir," I said quickly, and then added: "My father's with the Third Continentals. He's a captain," I finished proudly.

"Well," he said, not smiling now. He stared at me thoughtfully and then shifted his gaze to our house. "Well," he said again. Then: "I'm General Wayne.¹ I suppose you'll be very kind and introduce me to your mother?"

"She's dead, sir."

"I'm sorry. Then your sister, if she's the lady of the house."

I nodded. Bending over, he grasped me about the waist, lifting me to the saddle in front of him. Then he motioned for the aide to do the same with Ann, and we set off for the house.

"When did your mother die, sonny?" he asked me, as we cantered along.

¹ **General Wayne:** Anthony Wayne (1745–1796), American patriot and general, called "Mad Anthony" Wayne because of his reckless bravery.

"About three weeks ago—only " I told him about how she used to watch the valley all the time. "You see, father doesn't know yet," I said "Sis thought it would be best not to let him know."

"I see," he nodded gravely, but now his blue eyes were warm and merry; I don't think they ever lost that merry look. I twisted around him, so that I could see the troops marching into the valley. Now they were passing through our orchard, and many stooped to pick up rotten apples from the ground. His eyes followed mine. "It's pretty hard, this business of war, isn't it—for soldiers?" He seemed to include me in the last part.

"Not too hard," I answered evenly, "for soldiers."

Jane was waiting for us on the porch, looking very grave, the way she looked since mother had died. We rode up, and the general lifted me down to the porch. Then he dismounted himself, bowing very nicely to Jane, sweeping off his cocked hat with a graceful gesture, just as if it wasn't so battered and torn.

"Miss Corbatt?" the general said.

Jane nodded.

"I am General Wayne of the Continental Army, Pennsylvania line. I have two thousand troops, which I would like to encamp in that valley, for a few weeks only—I hope—but possibly for a good part of the winter. I presume the property is yours?"

"Yes." Jane courtesied to him. "Yes, the property is my father's. Won't you come inside? We can talk about it there."

General Wayne entered the house after Jane, and his aide followed, and I followed his aide. Ann tried to follow me, but I pushed her back. "This is no place for little girls," I warned her.

In the living-room, I wasn't noticed, and I made myself small in a corner. Jane sat in a chair, looking very pretty, I thought, and the two officers stood in front of her.

"You see," General Wayne was saying, "we can't be too far from the British—and we can't be too near. This spot is ideal."

"I think I understand."

"But you know what soldiers are—two thousand half-starved soldiers."

"My father is with the army, sir."

"Thank you, then. You are a very brave girl."

"No, no," Jane said quickly. "I'm doing nothing. Don't you see that it is safer with the troops here?"

General Wayne smiled sadly. "I'm afraid not. It is not very nice to have one's home turned into a battleground. Yet war is a bitter business all around."

"I know," Jane said.

"We should want to use your home as general headquarters. It will mean quartering myself and two or three officers. And a room to undertake business—"

Jane bent her head. "I hope you will be comfortable," she said.

"You are very kind. And now, if you will excuse me, you can make all arrangements with Captain Jones here."

The general left the room, and I followed him. Outside, he looked at me curiously.

"I suppose," he said thoughtfully, "that you will want to be a soldier some day?"

"Yes, sir."

His face was very grave, his mouth thin as a thread; with one hand, he shook out my long hair; the other was clasping and unclasping itself nervously. "Suppose," he considered—"suppose I make you a sort of general's special aide, to look after things I miss on?"

I was thrilling with pride, and I could hardly keep from bursting into shouts of pure joy; however, I managed to stand very still, saluting him. "That will be very fine, sir," I said. And I stood looking after him as he rode down into the valley.

I couldn't go in just yet. I had to stand there for a while, and be alone in my glory; so I remained as he left me, very still, looking over the valley to where the sun was setting, making the river a band of gleaming red. Then, after a little while, I went inside.

I heard Jane laughing in the parlor, and it surprised me. It was the first time she had laughed since mother died. I went in, and there she was, standing with the aide, laughing at something he had said. When she saw me, she stopped, and Captain Jones came forward, offering me his hand.

"How do you do, sir," I said, with dignity, since I was of the army now.

"How do you do," he answered.

"Captain Jones and General Wayne and some others will live at the house, Bently," Jane told me.

"I know," I replied.

I turned to go, and as I left the room, I heard Captain Jones saying: "I must apologize for my regimentals. We're pretty close to being beggars now—all of us."

The next few days were as exciting as any I had known. I had always considered our house a very lonely place, there being nobody I could play with outside of Ann and Jack, the caretaker's boy. And now, all of a sudden, there were two thousand men, encamped in a sprawling fashion through the apple orchard, over the hay-fields, and down the long slope to the river. Almost overnight, bubbles of tents had sprung up all over the place, and in and around our sheds a hundred horses were quartered. On the lawn, in front of our house, there were sixteen fieldpieces, ugly, sinister things, but oh, how fascinating!

And the soldiers—I made great friends of many of the soldiers before the bookman came, and I will get to the bookman later. I guess General Wayne spread the word around, about the commission he had given me, because the men took to calling me lieutenant, which I was very proud of, though I tried not to show it. I stole cakes and bread for them from the kitchen—not that we had so much, but they had almost nothing at all; and all the time I had to myself, I spent down in their camp. They were always telling me stories, and some of them knew my father. Sometimes, they would let me handle a musket; but the muskets were taller than I, and so heavy I could hardly lift them. What I saw in the camp used to make me sick sometimes. The men were always cold, because they were short of clothing and blankets; hardly any had shoes, and most were woefully thin. It would make me sick, and then I didn't know whether I wanted to be a soldier or not. But the men were always talking about their pay, which was to come from Philadelphia some day, and how much better all things would be after that.

The winter stole on, and the men remained in the valley. More men came, until there were almost three thousand of them. At

night, their fires twinkled like glow-worms, and in the daytime they were always drilling and parading. I didn't know why they drilled so much, but one day Captain Jones told me the reason. He said it was to keep them knowing that they were soldiers, and to make them forget that they were starving. I wondered how men could starve, yet live so long; but war is very strange, and you do not understand all the parts of it.

Our house became a busy place. In the parlor, General Wayne set up his main headquarters, and sometimes he sat there all day writing at his desk, receiving couriers, and dispatching couriers, too. I knew that most of his writing was for pay and food for his soldiers, because that was the main topic of talk. All day, men rode up to our house and away from it, and many times in the night I woke to hear a horse stamping his hoofs in front of the door.

I guess during that time Jane came to sort of like Captain Jones, and I guess she couldn't help it, he being around the house so much, and being such a handsome young gentleman, not at all thin and worn, like General Wayne.

Then the bookman came, after the troops had been in the valley for almost three weeks. They don't have many bookmen any more, men who wander around the country, stopping at houses to peddle books and give away news. Many of them write their own books, publish them, and peddle them. That is what Parson Weems² did with his stories of General Washington.

Well, the bookman came one day toward evening, not from the river valley, but riding the trail that trickled over the hills. He was dressed in worn homespun, an old broad-brimmed hat on his head, and a great pack of books on either side of his saddle. He didn't come to the house, but stopped at the barn, and I ran over to see what he had to sell. I knew he was a bookman, and I knew how rarely bookmen came nowadays.

"Hello," I called. "Hello, there, you bookman, you!"

He looked at me very gravely, and right there I liked him, from the beginning. He had little blue eyes, like General Wayne's, al-

² Parson Weems: Mason Locke Weems (1760-1825), American clergyman, author of a popular *Life of Washington*, which first contained the famous but fictitious anecdote of the cherry-tree

ways sparkling, and long yellow hair that fell to his shoulders. He seemed very old to me then, as most grown-ups did, but he couldn't have been much past thirty.

"Hello, sir," he said. He had a funny accent, vaguely familiar, and I took it to be back country talk. "Yes," he went on, "how do you do?"

"Fine," I answered. "And I hope you have English books, though Jane says I shouldn't read them now."

"And why shouldn't you read them now?" he asked.

"You know we're at war."

"Oh, yes, I do know it. I had a devil of a time getting through the sentries." He spoke as if he didn't approve of sentries or war. And then his eyes roved past me, down into the valley. He seemed surprised when he saw all the tents and soldiers.

"That looks like a big encampment," he said.

"Yes," I nodded proudly, "most all of the New Jersey line."

But he did not seem to wish to speak of the troops or the war. "What kind of books do you like?" he inquired, measuring me with his eyes.

Then I remembered my manners. "Won't you come in," I asked him, "and have something hot to drink? I am sure my sister would like your books, too."

Picking up his packs, he followed me into the kitchen, and while Mary, the cook, put up the kettle, I ran to call Jane. Jane liked bookmen, because they made things less lonely. "I'm sorry," she told him, "that you have to eat in the kitchen, but our house has become a regular military depot. I should like to offer you tea, but you know that we have none now."

"You are a very loyal family, aren't you?" the bookman said.

"My father is with the Third Continentals," Jane said quietly.

The bookman looked at her, as though he knew what Jane was probably thinking, how much more likely it would be for a strong man like him to be in the army than wandering around with a pack of books. And then he said, a slow smile coming to his lips: "But somebody has to sell books. They are as necessary as war."

"Perhaps," Jane answered him.

I went out then, because Ann was calling me, and together we

walked down into the valley. When I came back, the bookman was showing Jane his books.

He and Jane were close together, kneeling on the floor, where the books were spread out, and there, in the fading twilight, his yellow head made a very nice contrast with Jane's dark one. When I came in, Jane glanced at me.

"Don't you want to look at the books, Bently?"

"I was down in the valley," I said importantly, "and there's a great bustle there. I think that the troops are going to move soon, maybe at the end of this week or before that."

The bookman was looking at me very curiously, which I thought strange for a person who had so little interest in war. But a moment later, I had forgotten that, and I was looking at the books with Jane. He had a great many books for children, fascinating books full of pictures, such books as we saw very little of. And he seemed to have read every book, for he spoke of them in a way that no other person I had known ever had. He spoke of the books Jane wanted, too, and I could see that there was a lot in him that fascinated Jane, the same way it fascinated me.

I had my dinner, and after dinner, Jane was still with the bookman talking about books and other things. Then I went out on the porch, where Captain Jones was smoking his pipe.

"Who is that tattered wreck?" Captain Jones asked me.

"Oh, he's just a bookman."

"Just a bookman, eh?"

"Yes," I nodded, and then I sat down to keep him company.

That evening I sat in the kitchen, listening to the bookman. His stories weren't like the soldiers', about war, but about strange, distant lands. I could see right away that he liked me, and I was drawn to him more than I had ever been drawn to a stranger before. Later, Jane sat before the fire with us, and most of the talk was between her and the bookman. I remember some of the things he said.

"Egypt—like an old jewel in the sand. There are three of the great pyramids, and they stand all together, and if you watch the

sun set behind them—" And that sort of thing, for there seemed to be no land that he had not visited, although how this should be so with a bookman, neither of us knew.

"And the war—?" Jane once said to him.

"I sometimes wonder about the war," he answered, "but I don't know whether it is right or wrong. This new land is so big, so wild—why should anyone fight about it?"

"It is a very beautiful land, this America of ours," Jane said.

"Yes, with beautiful women."

I don't know whether Jane resented that or not, but she said nothing.

"Brave men and beautiful women," the bookman went on. "Oh, don't I know—how those men in the valley are so slowly starving. As ugly as war is, it makes more than men of us."

"Yet you do not believe enough to fight?"

"Are there not enough—shedding blood?"

"I suppose so."

"I love books," the bookman said. "I used to dream of a great house, when I could live out my days comfortably and slowly, with many, many books around me—and peace. I used to dream of that."

"I know," Jane nodded.

"Funny, how you dream, isn't it?"

When I went up to bed, Jane was still there with the bookman, talking. Jane said: "Good night, Bently," and the bookman shook hands with me. "Don't love war too much, boy," he said.

That night I dreamt of the things the bookman told me. He was to sleep in the barn, since there was no more room in the house, and I hoped I should see him the next morning.

The following day, there was more bustle than ever in the camp. All morning, it snowed; but the men were out, drilling in the snow, and new troops were trickling in all the time. At the house, General Wayne was in a fury of excitement, and I didn't dare go into the parlor. Once, a tall, tired-looking man rode up with a couple of aides, and he was with General Wayne for more than an hour.

I heard the sentries whispering that it was General Washington; but he did not seem to be at all the great man I had heard of, only a tall, tired-looking person in a uniform patched all over.

I went to the kitchen, to examine the books the bookman had left, and while I was there, he came in. I was glad he had not gone. I hoped Jane would like him a great deal, perhaps induce him to remain a fortnight. I would have been content to listen forever to his smooth, enchanting voice.

"I want you to read this," he said. It was Malory's book on King Arthur, and I curled up before the fire with it.

Two more days went by, while the bookman remained, and I noticed that Jane was spending more and more time with him. Nor did Captain Jones enjoy this. Once, I had seen Captain Jones in the tea-room, with Jane in his arms, and I know that whenever Jane spoke of him, there was a funny, far-off look in her eyes. Even now, with the bookman there, Jane grew more and more downhearted as the time came for the troops to depart.

"But the bookman may remain," I once said to her.

"Yes," Jane answered.

The troops were to depart in the morning. That day they began to break camp, and the fieldpieces were wheeled off our lawn, onto the river road. General Wayne was clearing his affairs in the parlor, and I could see he was more excited than usual.

"The old fox has something up his sleeve," one of the sentries told me.

"It wasn't for nothing he was holdin' that palaver with General Washington," another said.

There was nothing much for me to do, since everyone was so busy, and I went to look for the bookman. I climbed to the little room he had, over the hayloft, and I thought I would surprise him. There was a crack in the door, and I looked through it. There was the bookman, sitting on the floor, writing in a little pad he held on his knee. Then I knocked. He seemed to stiffen suddenly. The paper he was writing on, he folded, thrust into a crack in the floor, covered his writing materials with hay, and then sauntered to the door. When he saw it was only me, he appeared to be relieved.

"Yes," he said when he had opened the door, "I should be settling

things with your sister. I'm to leave soon, and I want to find out what books she'll take."

"You're going?" I said.

"You don't want me to, do you, laddie? But we must all go on, a-wandering. Perhaps I'll come back some day—"

Walking over to the house with him, I almost forgot about the paper. Then I remembered, and excused myself. Without thinking of what I was doing, I ran back to the barn, to his room. I was all trembling with excitement now, for I had quite decided to find out who our bookman really was. I dug up the paper, and began to read:

"Your Excellency:

"I have done my best, yet discovered precious little. There are all of three thousand troops here now, with twenty-two pieces of ordnance, all told, and they will be moving north the morning you receive this, possibly to connect with General Washington. . . ."

I read on, but my eyes blurred. First I was crying, and good and ashamed of myself; then I realized that the bookman must not find me there. I stumbled down from the loft and out into the snow, the cold air stinging me into awareness, the paper clutched in my hand. The whole world was reeling around me.

"Why did it have to be him?" I muttered.

I guess I went over to the kitchen to look at him again, to see whether it had been my own, splendid bookman. I opened the door quietly, and there was the bookman kissing Jane.

"Go away from here," she whispered.

"You do love me, don't you," he said.

"I don't know—I don't know."

"Then I'll tell you. You do love me, but you have too much pride in that glorious little head of yours. I'm a tattered wanderer, who has fascinated you with his tales, and you certainly would be a fool to throw away yourself on someone like me. But you do love me."

"Yes."

Jane shook her head, and I remember that even then I thought that Jane was truly splendid.

"No," she said, "I'm not sorry. Why should I be sorry? I love you—that's all there is to it."

"Then you know. In the few days I've been here, you know."

"Yes, I know."

I could see the bookman's face from the side, and I don't think I ever saw a sadder face than that. And beautiful, too, what with all his yellow hair falling to his shoulders. I don't know how, knowing what I knew, I could have stood there, watching all this.

"If you knew all—but thank God you don't. Listen, Jane I kissed you once. I shan't kiss you again—unless some day I come back. Would you wait?"

"I love you," Jane said. "I know I'll never love anyone else the way I love you."

I couldn't stand any more of that. I went up to my room and cried. Then I remembered that a Continental doesn't cry; I think I remembered my commission.

General Wayne was in the parlor when I came in, and I could see that he was annoyed, being so busy. But he nodded to me.

"And what is your business, sir?" he inquired.

"Could I ask you something?"

The general pushed his papers aside. Now his eyes were twinkling, and I knew he would take some time with me. He had always liked me.

"Suppose a soldier runs away?" I said.

"There are times when the best do—have to," the general smiled.

"But suppose he knows his duty is to advance?"

"Then he's a coward—and a traitor," the general said slowly, staring at me very curiously.

"He's a coward, sir?"

"Yes."

I gave him the crumpled piece of paper. But I didn't cry then; I looked straight at him.

"What's this?" He read it through, puckered up his lips, and read it through again. "My God," he whispered, "where did you get this, child!"

I told him. I told him where he could find the bookman, and then I said:

"Will you excuse me now, sir?" I knew that something would happen inside of me, if I didn't get away very quickly.

They shot the bookman that evening. Captain Jones tried to keep Jane in the house. "You mustn't see it," he pleaded with her. "Jane, why on God's earth should you want to see it?"

"Why?" She looked at him wonderingly, and then she put both her hands up against his face. "You love me, don't you, Jack?"

"You know it by now."

"And you know what funny things love does to you Well, that is why I must see it—must "

But he didn't understand; neither did I just then.

General Wayne came by while they were talking, and he stopped, staring at the group of us. Then he said, brusquely: "Let them see it, Captain, if they want to. I don't think it will hurt Bently This spy is a brave man."

They stood the bookman up against the side of the barn, up against the stone foundation. He smiled when they offered to blindfold him, and he asked not to have his hands bound.

"Could I talk to him?" I asked.

"Very well, but not for long."

The bookman had a tired look on his face. Until I was close to him, he had been watching Jane. Then he glanced down at me.

"Hello, laddie," he said.

My eyes were full of tears, so I couldn't see him very well now.

"A good soldier doesn't cry," he smiled.

"Yes, I know."

"You want to tell me that you saw me hide the paper, don't you, laddie?"

"Yes."

"And you're sorry now?"

"I had to do it."

"I understand. Give me your hand, laddie."

I went back to Jane then, and she put her arm around me, holding me so tight that it hurt. I was still watching the bookman.

"Sir," the bookman called out, "you will see that my superiors

are informed. My name is Anthony Engel. My rank Brevet Lieutenant Colonel."

General Wayne nodded. Then the rifles blazed out, and then the bookman was dead. . . .

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. What did you learn about the condition of the American troops in the fall of 1780?
2. What did you learn about General Wayne? About General Washington? About book peddlers of that day?
3. Use the dictionary for: palaver, regimentals.

SOMETHING TO DO

Let the class build up a good list of historical novels for outside reading by having each member of the class select some historical period and contribute to the class list the names of one, two, or three of the best historical novels laid in this period.

FOR FURTHER READING: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Stephen Vincent Benét	Jacob and the Indians
	A Tooth for Paul Revere
Ambrose Bierce	A Horseman in the Sky
Alphonse Daudet	The Last Class
Howard Fast	Conyngham
	The Day of Victory
	Patrick Henry and the Frigate's Keel
Edward Everett Hale	The Man Without a Country
John W. Thomason, Jr.	Return to Texas
	The Stars in Their Courses
Stanley Vestal	Warpath
Yeh Shao-Chün	Neighbors

CHARACTER: HUMAN NATURE

FOR most of us, few interests in life are more persistent or more satisfying than the interest in *human nature*. Life is never dull for those who have a curiosity about the true *character* of other people, and most of us are constantly seeking to satisfy this curiosity.

Two things stand in our way. One is that life is short, and the number of people we can learn to know is limited. Of course, by airplane and radio even a village grocer can see and hear more of the world in a few months today than Marco Polo or Columbus did in a lifetime; but although air transport has somewhat stretched men's legs, still it has not lengthened their lives. The other difficulty is that people do not wear their characters on their sleeves, and even the X ray does not reveal people's secret thoughts.

Fortunately, good books help us to overcome both of these obstacles. Are you too poor in money or in time to travel to China? You may learn to know the Chinese character by reading good stories about China. Are you sometimes baffled when you try to understand why people act as they do? The best authors make it their business to study people and explain their behavior; reading such authors will add to your knowledge of your fellow men.

In short, learning more of the truth about human nature is one of the chief permanent values that come to the reader of short stories along with the fun of his reading. I admit that interest in character analysis is a fairly adult interest—that younger readers are often interested in the action of the story and nothing more. I hope, of course, that your interest in action may never fail; but it may be said, too, that until you have learned to derive satisfaction from truthful and revealing portrayals of human nature, you have hardly grown up in your reading.

A MOTHER IN MANNVILLE

Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings

In the following story about a lonely boy in the Carolina mountains, the author does indeed reveal Jerry's secret thoughts, but not by saying plainly what they are. She does it by telling what Jerry said, and what he did, and by showing us the look in his eyes. This is the way we would have to discover his thoughts in real life, if we discovered them at all. And indeed, this story does not sound like fiction; it is as convincing as truth. It is hard to believe that the experiences Mrs. Rawlings relates are imaginary. Perhaps they aren't.

The laurel-covered hills form a lovely setting; but this story is primarily a story of character, and can hardly fail to deepen your understanding of human nature and quicken your sympathy for lonely hearts. You will need to have a very thick skin indeed, not to be deeply moved by Jerry's story. In addition, though there does not seem to be much of a plot, there is nevertheless a real surprise at the end.

THE orphanage is high in the Carolina mountains. Sometimes in winter the snowdrifts are so deep that the institution is cut off from the village below, from all the world. Fog hides the mountain peaks, the snow swirls down the valleys, and a wind blows so bitterly that the orphanage boys who take the milk twice daily to the baby cottage reach the door with fingers stiff in an agony of numbness.

"Or when we carry trays from the cookhouse for the ones that are sick," Jerry said, "we get our faces frostbit, because we can't put our hands over them. I have gloves," he added. "Some of the boys don't have any."

He liked the late spring, he said. The rhododendron was in

bloom, a carpet of color, across the mountainsides, soft as the May winds that stirred the hemlocks. He called it laurel.

"It's pretty when the laurel blooms," he said. "Some of it's pink and some of it's white."

I was there in the autumn. I wanted quiet, isolation, to do some troublesome writing. I wanted mountain air to blow out the malaria from too long a time in the subtropics. I was homesick, too, for the flaming of maples in October, and for corn shocks and pumpkins and black-walnut trees and the lift of hills. I found them all, living in a cabin that belonged to the orphanage, half a mile beyond the orphanage farm. When I took the cabin, I asked for a boy or man to come and chop wood for the fireplace. The first few days were warm, I found what wood I needed about the cabin, no one came, and I forgot the order.

I looked up from my typewriter one late afternoon, a little startled. A boy stood at the door, and my pointer dog, my companion, was at his side and had not barked to warn me. The boy was probably twelve years old, but undersized. He wore overalls and a torn shirt, and was barefooted.

He said, "I can chop some wood today."

I said, "But I have a boy coming from the orphanage."

"I'm the boy."

"You? But you're small."

"Size don't matter, chopping wood," he said. "Some of the big boys don't chop good. I've been chopping wood at the orphanage a long time."

I visualized mangled and inadequate branches for my fires. I was well into my work and not inclined to conversation. I was a little blunt.

"Very well. There's the ax. Go ahead and see what you can do."

I went back to work, closing the door. At first the sound of the boy dragging brush annoyed me. Then he began to chop. The blows were rhythmic and steady, and shortly I had forgotten him, the sound no more of an interruption than a consistent rain. I suppose an hour and a half passed, for when I stopped and stretched, and heard the boy's steps on the cabin stoop, the sun was

dropping behind the farthest mountain, and the valleys were purple with something deeper than the asters.

The boy said, "I have to go to supper now. I can come again tomorrow evening."

I said, "I'll pay you now for what you've done," thinking I should probably have to insist on an older boy. "Ten cents an hour?"

"Anything is all right."

We went together back of the cabin. An astonishing amount of solid wood had been cut. There were cherry logs and heavy roots of rhododendron, and blocks from the waste pine and oak left from the building of the cabin.

"But you've done as much as a man," I said. "This is a splendid pile."

I looked at him, actually, for the first time. His hair was the color of the corn shocks and his eyes, very direct, were like the mountain sky when rain is pending—gray, with a shadowing of that miraculous blue. As I spoke, a light came over him, as though the setting sun had touched him with the same suffused glory with which it touched the mountains. I gave him a quarter.

"You may come tomorrow," I said, "and thank you very much."

He looked at me, and at the coin, and seemed to want to speak, but could not, and turned away.

"I'll split kindling tomorrow," he said over his thin ragged shoulder. "You'll need kindling and medium wood and logs and backlogs."

At daylight I was half wakened by the sound of chopping. Again it was so even in texture that I went back to sleep. When I left my bed in the cool morning, the boy had come and gone, and a stack of kindling was neat against the cabin wall. He came again after school in the afternoon and worked until time to return to the orphanage. His name was Jerry; he was twelve years old, and he had been at the orphanage since he was four. I could picture him at four, with the same grave gray-blue eyes and the same—independence? No, the word that comes to me is "integrity."

The word means something very special to me, and the quality

for which I use it is a rare one. My father had it—there is another of whom I am almost sure—but almost no man of my acquaintance possesses it with the clarity, the purity, the simplicity of a mountain stream. But the boy Jerry had it. It is bedded on courage, but it is more than brave. It is honest, but it is more than honesty. The ax handle broke one day. Jerry said the woodshop at the orphanage would repair it. I brought money to pay for the job and he refused it.

"I'll pay for it," he said. "I broke it. I brought the ax down careless."

"But no one hits accurately every time," I told him. "The fault was in the wood of the handle. I'll see the man from whom I bought it."

It was only then that he would take the money. He was standing back of his own carelessness. He was a free-will agent and he chose to do careful work, and if he failed, he took the responsibility without subterfuge.

And he did for me the unnecessary thing, the gracious thing, that we find done only by the great of heart. Things no training can teach, for they are done on the instant, with no predicated experience. He found a cubbyhole beside the fireplace that I had not noticed. There, of his own accord, he put kindling and "medium" wood, so that I might always have dry fire material ready in case of sudden wet weather. A stone was loose in the rough walk to the cabin. He dug a deeper hole and steadied it, although he came, himself, by a short cut over the bank. I found that when I tried to return his thoughtfulness with such things as candy and apples, he was wordless. "Thank you" was, perhaps, an expression for which he had no use, for his courtesy was instinctive. He only looked at the gift and at me, and a curtain lifted, so that I saw deep into the clear well of his eyes, and gratitude was there, and affection, soft over the firm granite of his character.

He made simple excuses to come and sit with me. I could no more have turned him away than if he had been physically hungry. I suggested once that the best time for us to visit was just before supper, when I left off my writing. After that, he waited always

until my typewriter had been some time quiet. One day I worked until nearly dark. I went outside the cabin, having forgotten him. I saw him going up over the hill in the twilight toward the orphanage. When I sat down on my stoop, a place was warm from his body where he had been sitting.

He became intimate, of course, with my pointer, Pat. There is a strange communion between a boy and a dog. Perhaps they possess the same singleness of spirit, the same kind of wisdom. It is difficult to explain, but it exists. When I went across the state for a week end, I left the dog in Jerry's charge. I gave him the dog whistle and the key to the cabin, and left sufficient food. He was to come two or three times a day and let out the dog, and feed and exercise him. I should return Sunday night, and Jerry would take out the dog for the last time Sunday afternoon and then leave the key under an agreed hiding place.

My return was belated and fog filled the mountain passes so treacherously that I dared not drive at night. The fog held the next morning, and it was Monday noon before I reached the cabin. The dog had been fed and cared for that morning. Jerry came early in the afternoon, anxious.

"The superintendent said nobody would drive in the fog," he said. "I came just before bedtime last night and you hadn't come. So I brought Pat some of my breakfast this morning. I wouldn't have let anything happen to him."

"I was sure of that. I didn't worry."

"When I heard about the fog, I thought you'd know."

He was needed for work at the orphanage and he had to return at once. I gave him a dollar in payment, and he looked at it and went away. But that night he came in the darkness and knocked at the door.

"Come in, Jerry," I said, "if you're allowed to be away this late."

"I told maybe a story," he said. "I told them I thought you would want to see me."

"That's true," I assured him, and I saw his relief. "I want to hear about how you managed with the dog."

He sat by the fire with me, with no other light, and told me of

their two days together. The dog lay close to him, and found a comfort there that I did not have for him. And it seemed to me that being with my dog, and caring for him, had brought the boy and me, too, together, so that he felt that he belonged to me as well as to the animal.

"He stayed right with me," he told me, "except when he ran in the laurel. He likes the laurel. I took him up over the hill and we both ran fast. There was a place where the grass was high and I lay down in it and hid. I could hear Pat hunting for me. He found my trail and he barked. When he found me, he acted crazy, and he ran around and around me, in circles."

We watched the flames.

"That's an apple log," he said. "It burns the prettiest of any wood."

We were very close.

He was suddenly impelled to speak of things he had not spoken of before, nor had I cared to ask him.

"You look a little bit like my mother," he said. "Especially in the dark, by the fire."

"But you were only four, Jerry, when you came here. You have remembered how she looked, all these years?"

"My mother lives in Mannville," he said.

For a moment, finding that he had a mother shocked me as greatly as anything in my life has ever done, and I did not know why it disturbed me. Then I understood my distress. I was filled with a passionate resentment that any woman should go away and leave her son. A fresh anger added itself. A son like this one— The orphanage was a wholesome place, the executives were kind, good people, the food was more than adequate, the boys were healthy, a ragged shirt was no hardship, nor the doing of clean labor. Granted, perhaps, that the boy felt no lack, what blood fed the veins of a woman who did not yearn over her own child's lean body? At four he would have looked the same as now. Nothing, I thought, nothing in life could change those eyes. His quality must be apparent to an idiot, a fool. I burned with questions I could not ask. In any case, I was afraid, there would be pain.

"Have you seen her, Jerry—lately?"

"I see her every summer. She sends for me."

I wanted to cry out, "Why are you not with her? How can she let you go away again?"

He said, "She comes up here from Mannville whenever she can. She doesn't have a job now."

His face shone in the firelight.

"She wanted to give me a puppy, but they can't let any one boy keep a puppy. You remember the suit I had on last Sunday?" He was plainly proud. "She sent me that for Christmas. The Christmas before that"—he drew a long breath, savoring the memory—"she sent me a pair of skates."

"Roller skates?"

My mind was busy, making pictures of her, trying to understand her. She had not, then, entirely deserted or forgotten him. But why, then—I thought, "I must not condemn her without knowing."

"Roller skates. I let the other boys use them. They're always borrowing them. But they're careful of them."

What circumstances other than poverty—

"I'm going to take the dollar you gave me for taking care of Pat," he said, "and buy her a pair of gloves."

I could only say, "That will be nice. Do you know her size?"

"I think it's 8½," he said.

He looked at my hands.

"Do you wear 8½?" he asked.

"No. I wear a smaller size, a 6."

"Oh! Then I guess her hands are bigger than yours."

I hated her. Poverty or no, there was other food than bread, and the soul could starve as quickly as the body. He was taking his dollar to buy gloves for her big stupid hands, and she lived away from him, in Mannville, and contented herself with sending him skates.

"She likes white gloves," he said. "Do you think I can get them for a dollar?"

"I think so," I said.

I decided that I should not leave the mountains without seeing her and knowing for myself why she had done this thing.

The human mind scatters its interests as though made of thistle-down, and every wind stirs and moves it. I finished my work. It did not please me, and I gave my thoughts to another field. I should need some Mexican material.

I made arrangements to close my Florida place. Mexico immediately, and doing the writing there, if conditions were favorable. Then, Alaska with my brother. After that, heaven knew what or where.

I did not take time to go to Mannville to see Jerry's mother, nor even to talk with the orphanage officials about her. I was a trifle abstracted about the boy, because of my work and plans. And after my first fury at her—we did not speak of her again—his having a mother, any sort at all, not far away, in Mannville, relieved me of the ache I had had about him. He did not question the anomalous relation. He was not lonely. It was none of my concern.

He came every day and cut my wood and did small helpful favors and stayed to talk. The days had become cold, and often I let him come inside the cabin. He would lie on the floor in front of the fire, with one arm across the pointer, and they would both doze and wait quietly for me. Other days they ran with a common ecstasy through the laurel, and since the asters were now gone, he brought me back vermilion maple leaves, and chestnut boughs dripping with imperial yellow. I was ready to go.

I said to him, "You have been my good friend, Jerry. I shall often think of you and miss you. Pat will miss you too. I am leaving tomorrow."

He did not answer. When he went away, I remember that a new moon hung over the mountains, and I watched him go in silence up the hill. I expected him the next day, but he did not come. The details of packing my personal belongings, loading my car, arranging the bed over the seat, where the dog would ride, occupied me until late in the day. I closed the cabin and started the car, noticing that the sun was in the west and I should do well

to be out of the mountains by nightfall. I stopped by the orphanage and left the cabin key and money for my light bill with Miss Clark.

"And will you call Jerry for me to say good-by to him?"

"I don't know where he is," she said. "I'm afraid he's not well. He didn't eat his dinner this noon. One of the other boys saw him going over the hill into the laurel. He was supposed to fire the boiler this afternoon. It's not like him; he's unusually reliable."

I was almost relieved, for I knew I should never see him again, and it would be easier not to say good-by to him.

I said, "I wanted to talk with you about his mother—why he's here—but I'm in more of a hurry than I expected to be. It's out of the question for me to see her now too. But here's some money I'd like to leave with you to buy things for him at Christmas and on his birthday. It will be better than for me to try to send him things. I could so easily duplicate—skates, for instance."

She blinked her honest spinster's eyes.

"There's not much use for skates here," she said.

Her stupidity annoyed me.

"What I mean," I said, "is that I don't want to duplicate things his mother sends him. I might have chosen skates if I didn't know she had already given them to him."

She stared at me.

"I don't understand," she said. "He has no mother. He has no skates."

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Give instances of Jerry's conduct to show what Mrs. Rawlings means by "the firm granite of his character."

2. Understanding of the word *integrity* is fundamental to an understanding of this story. Tell as clearly as you can what *integrity* means. In spite of the lies Jerry told, Mrs. Rawlings thinks that integrity was his finest trait. Can you explain the apparent contradiction?

3. Why did Jerry tell those lies? Mrs. Rawlings says, "I could no more turn him away than if he had been physically hungry." What

was he hungry for? Tell of other instances in which people have done curious things because of this kind of hunger.

4. Explain the quotation, "Man does not live by bread alone." Find a reference to this quotation in the story.

5. Are there degrees of badness in lying? Tell why *you* would (or would not) have forgiven Jerry's falsehoods. Relate an instance of a lie told purely for the purpose of deceiving others. Or relate an instance of a lie (your own, perhaps) told for the sake of avoiding some pain of spirit, some embarrassment, some penalty.

6. Explain in what sense this story has increased your understanding of human nature.

7. Use the dictionary for: suffused, subterfuge, predicated, communion, anomalous.

SOMETHING TO DO

Write a paragraph describing a person you know, or one you imagine as the hero or villain of a story you may write later. Choose for your subject someone with a definite, outstanding trait of character or personality, such as conceit, courage, selfishness, nervousness, indifference to others' opinions, strength, tendency to see humor in everything. Begin with external details—matters of appearance and manner, but don't stop there. Your description should move from external details to the character trait. Better yet, use the external details to *reveal* the significant trait. Don't try to crowd *every* detail of appearance into your description; too many details only confuse the reader, and blur the picture. Give just enough of these to make a clear, vivid impression.

FOR FURTHER READING: CHARACTER

Sherwood Anderson	I'm a Fool
Stephen Morehouse Avery . . .	Never in This World
Pearl S. Buck	The Angel
	The Frill
Willa Cather	A Wagner Matinée
Hector I. Eandi	A Christmas Reverie
Rose Feld	Sophie Halenczik's Greenhorns
Mary E. Wilkins Freeman . . .	The Revolt of Mother
Paul Gallico	Bombardier
	The Snow Goose

John Galsworthy	Quality
Bret Harte	Tennessee's Partner
James Hilton	Mr. Chips Meets a Sinner
Katherine Mansfield	Miss Brill
	Mr. Reginald Peacock's Day
Leonid Sobolev	Making a Man of Him
Robert Louis Stevenson	Markheim
Eudora Welty	A Worn Path

STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS

WRITERS who are concerned almost solely with revealing what they have learned about character often employ a special method of narration called the *stream-of-consciousness* technique. In this kind of writing, everything that happens is presented as it passes through the mind of one of the characters. You see the other persons and the events of the story as he saw them, along with his reactions to the events, his judgments of the people, and all the other significant or insignificant thoughts that passed through his mind during the period of time covered by the story. Thus the author is able to give a very revealing glimpse of the character whose continuous thought is being recorded.

THE WALTZ

Dorothy Parker

This little story is not written in the serious vein usually found in stream-of-consciousness stories, but I think you will find it a pleasant introduction to this literary technique. As the girl dances the waltz, her spoken words are recorded in italics. All the rest of the story is her thoughts, the stream of her consciousness, the continuous flow of her mental reactions.

Why, thank you so much. I'd adore to.

I don't want to dance with him. I don't want to dance with anybody. And even if I did, it wouldn't be him. He'd be well down among the last ten. I've seen the way he dances; it looks like something you do on St. Walpurgis Night.¹ Just think, not a quarter of an hour ago, here I was sitting, feeling so sorry for the poor girl he was dancing with. And now *I'm* going to be the poor girl. Well, well. Isn't it a small world?

And a peach of a world, too. A true little corker. Its events are so fascinatingly unpredictable, are not they? Here I was, minding my own business, not doing a stitch of harm to any living soul. And then he comes into my life, all smiles and city manners, to sue me for the favor of one memorable mazurka. Why, he scarcely knows my name, let alone what it stands for. It stands for Despair, Bewilderment, Futility, Degradation, and Premeditated Murder, but little does he wot. I don't wot his name, either; I haven't any idea what it is. Jukes,² would be my guess from

¹ **St. Walpurgis' Night:** according to German superstition, a witches' celebration on a mountain top

² **Jukes:** a pseudonym for an infamous New York State family studied by criminologists. Many of the descendants of the original Dutch settler were anti-social undesirables and criminals

the look in his eyes. How do you do, Mr. Jukes? And how is that dear little brother of yours, with the two heads?

Ah, now why did he have to come around me, with his low requests? Why can't he let me lead my own life? I ask so little—just to be left alone in my quiet corner of the table, to do my evening brooding over all my sorrows. And he must come, with his bows and his scrapes and his may-I-have-these-ones. And I had to go and tell him that I'd adore to dance with him. I cannot understand why I wasn't struck right down dead. Yes, and being struck dead would look like a day in the country, compared to struggling out a dance with this boy. But what could I do? Everyone else at the table had got up to dance, except him and me. There I was, trapped. Trapped like a trap in a trap.

What can you say, when a man asks you to dance with him? I most certainly will *not* dance with you, I'll see you in hell first. Oh, yes, *do* let's dance together—it's so nice to meet a man who isn't a scaredy-cat about catching my beri-beri. No. There was nothing for me to do, but say I'd adore to. Well, we might as well get it over with. All right, Cannonball, let's run out on the field. You won the toss; you can lead.

Why, I think it's more of a waltz, really. Isn't it? We might just listen to the music a second. Shall we? Oh, yes, it's a waltz. Mind? Why, I'm simply thrilled. I'd love to waltz with you.

I'd love to waltz with you. I'd love to waltz with you, I'd love to have my tonsils out, I'd love to be in a midnight fire at sea. Well, it's too late now. We're getting under way. *Oh. Oh, dear. Oh, dear, dear, dear. Oh, this is even worse than I thought it would be. I suppose that's the one dependable law of life—everything is always worse than you thought it was going to be. Oh, if I had had any real grasp of what this dance would be like, I'd have held out for sitting it out. Well, it will probably amount to the same thing in the end. We'll be sitting it out on the floor in a minute, if he keeps this up.*

I'm so glad I brought it to his attention that this is a waltz they're playing. Heaven knows what might have happened, if he had thought it was something fast; we'd have blown the sides right out of the building. Why does he always want to be somewhere

that he isn't? Why can't we stay in one place just long enough to get acclimated? It's this constant rush, rush, rush, that's the curse of American life. That's the reason that we're all of us so—*Ow!* Don't *kick*, you idiot; this is only second down. Oh, my shin. My poor, poor shin, that I've had ever since I was a little girl!

Oh, no, no, no. Goodness, no. It didn't hurt the least little bit. And anyway it was my fault. Really it was. Truly. Well, you're just being sweet, to say that. It really was all my fault.

I wonder what I'd better do—kill him this instant, with my naked hands, or wait and let him drop in his traces. Maybe it's best not to make a scene. I guess I'll just lie low, and watch the pace get him. He can't keep this up indefinitely—he's only flesh and blood. Die he must, and die he shall, for what he did to me. I don't want to be of the over-sensitive type, but you can't tell me that kick was unpremeditated. Freud³ says there are no accidents. I've led no cloistered life, I've known dancing partners who have spoiled my slippers and torn my dress; but when it comes to kicking, I am Outraged Womanhood. When you kick me in the shin, *smile*.

Maybe he didn't do it maliciously. Maybe it's just his way of showing his high spirits. I suppose I ought to be glad that one of us is having such a good time. I suppose I ought to think myself lucky if he brings me back alive. Maybe it's captious to demand of a practically strange man that he leave your shins as he found them. After all, the poor boy's doing the best he can. Probably he grew up in the hill country, and never had no larnin'. I bet they had to throw him on his back to get shoes on him.

Yes, it's lovely, isn't it? It's simply lovely. It's the loveliest waltz. Isn't it? Oh, I think it's lovely, too.

Why, I'm getting positively drawn to the Triple Threat here. He's my hero. He has the heart of a lion, and the sinews of a buffalo. Look at him—never a thought of the consequences, never afraid of his face, hurling himself into every scrimmage, eyes shining, cheeks ablaze. And shall it be said that I hung back? No, a thousand times no. What's it to me if I have to spend the

³ Freud: Sigmund Freud, noted Austrian psychologist.

next couple of years in a plaster cast? Come on, Butch, right through them! Who wants to live forever?

Oh. Oh, dear. Oh, he's all right, thank goodness. For a while I thought they'd have to carry him off the field. Ah, I couldn't bear to have anything happen to him. I love him. I love him better than anybody in the world. Look at the spirit he gets into a dreary, commonplace waltz, how effete the other dancers seem, beside him. He is youth and vigor and courage, he is strength and gayety and—*Ow!* Get off my instep, you hulking peasant! What do you think I am, anyway—a gangplank? *Ow!*

No, of course it didn't hurt. Why, it didn't a bit. Honestly. And it was all my fault. You see, that little step of yours—well, it's perfectly lovely, but it's just a tiny bit tricky to follow at first. Oh, did you work it up yourself? You really did? Well, aren't you amazing! Oh, now I think I've got it. Oh, I think it's lovely. I was watching you do it when you were dancing before. It's awfully effective when you look at it.

It's awfully effective when you look at it. I bet I'm awfully effective when you look at me. My hair is hanging along my cheeks, my skirt is swaddled about me, I can feel the cold damp of my brow. I must look like something out of the Fall of the House of Usher.⁴ This sort of thing takes a fearful toll of a woman my age. And he worked up his little step himself, he with his degenerate cunning. And it was just a tiny bit tricky at first, but now I think I've got it. Two stumbles, slip, and a twenty-yard dash; yes, I've got it. I've got several other things, too, including a split shin and a bitter heart. I hate this creature I'm chained to. I hated him the moment I saw his leering, bestial face. And here I've been locked in his noxious embrace for the thirty-five years this waltz has lasted. Is that orchestra never going to stop playing? Or must this obscene travesty of a dance go on until hell burns out?

Oh, they're going to play another encore. Oh, goody. Oh, that's lovely. Tired? I should say I'm not tired. I'd like to go on like this forever.

⁴ The Fall of the House of Usher: a gruesome story by Edgar Allan Poe.

I should say I'm not tired. I'm dead, that's all I am. Dead, and in what a cause! And the music is never going to stop playing, and we're going on like this, Double-Time Charlie and I, throughout eternity. I suppose I won't care any more, after the first hundred thousand years. I suppose nothing will matter then, not heat nor pain nor broken heart nor cruel, aching weariness. Well. It can't come too soon for me.

I wonder why I didn't tell him I was tired. I wonder why I didn't suggest going back to the table. I could have said let's just listen to the music. Yes, and if he would, that would be the first bit of attention he has given it all evening. George Jean Nathan said that the lovely rhythms of the waltz should be listened to in stillness and not be accompanied by strange gyrations of the human body. I think that's what he said. I think it was George Jean Nathan. Anyhow, whatever he said and whoever he was and whatever he's doing now, he's better off than I am. That's safe. Anybody who isn't waltzing with this Mrs. O'Leary's cow⁵ I've got here is having a good time.

Still, if we were back at the table, I'd probably have to talk to him. Look at him—what could you say to a thing like that! Did you go to the circus this year, what's your favorite kind of ice cream, how do you spell cat? I guess I'm as well off here. As well off as if I were in a cement mixer in full action.

I'm past all feeling now. The only way I can tell when he steps on me is that I can hear the splintering of bones. And all the events of my life are passing before my eyes. There was the time I was in a hurricane in the West Indies, there was the day I got my head cut open in the taxi smash, there was the night the drunken lady threw a bronze ash-tray at her own true love and got me instead, there was that summer that the sailboat kept capsizing. Ah, what an easy, peaceful time was mine, until I fell in with Swifty, here. I didn't know what trouble was, before I got drawn into this *danse macabre*.⁶ I think my mind is beginning to

⁵ Mrs. O'Leary's cow: According to legend this animal clumsily kicked over a lantern and started the great Chicago fire in 1871.

⁶ *danse macabre*: dance of Death, in which skeletons come out of their graves and dance awkwardly

wander. It almost seems to me as if the orchestra were stopping. It couldn't be, of course; it could never, never be. And yet in my ears there is a silence like the sound of angel voices. . . .

Oh, they've stopped, the mean things. They're not going to play any more. Oh, darn. Oh, do you think they would? Do you really think so, if you gave them fifty dollars? Oh, that would be lovely. And look, do tell them to play this same thing. I'd simply adore to go on waltzing.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Even though the main purpose of this story is amusement, nevertheless the stream-of-consciousness method results in considerable character revelation. Make a list of adjectives descriptive of the girl. Make a similar list for the boy.
2. Use the dictionary for maliciously, captious, effete, noxious, travesty, gyrations.

SOMETHING TO DO

Refer to your English composition book for a review of the rules of punctuation and capitalization in the writing of conversation. Then write a page of the conversation that might take place if the girl in "The Waltz" told about her experience to a group of girls, or her boy friend, or her mother. Or, if you prefer, write some other conversation which will demonstrate that you can handle correctly the mechanics of written conversation. Rewrite a section of "The Catbird Seat," paragraphing the conversation according to the rules in your composition text.

THEME: THE CHALLENGE OF IDEAS

PERHAPS the most obvious value you can derive from reading, beyond mere pleasure, is an awareness of significant truths of life, and of ideas which govern your conduct. In a sermon the preacher often uses an anecdote to illustrate a point he is trying to make. In like manner the short-story writer often is trying to convey to the reader some vital thought about conduct or character, or some philosophic truth. Such an idea is called the *theme* of the story.

Stories with themes have an ancient and honorable tradition. Aesop's fable "The Fox and the Grapes" taught its readers that it is easy to despise what we cannot have. Jesus' parable "The Good Samaritan" was told to teach his hearers that brotherly love is a finer ideal than snobbish indifference. Among American writers, Nathaniel Hawthorne, in "The Minister's Black Veil," points out the significant truth that people never completely expose their inner selves to others.

WHERE LOVE IS, THERE GOD IS ALSO

Leo N. Tolstoy

Tolstoy, one of the greatest Russian writers, is famed for the concern with right and wrong that characterizes all his stories. The story that follows could well serve as a sermon. You will not have to look hard for the theme. Tolstoy wrote it into the title, and then repeated it more clearly by quoting from Scripture the passage he wrote the story to illustrate.

IN a certain city dwelt Martin Avdyeeich, the cobbler. He lived in a cellar, a wretched little hole with a single window. The window looked up toward the street, and through it Martin could just see the passers-by. It is true that he could see little more than their boots, but Martin Avdyeeich could read a man's character by his boots; so he needed no more. Martin Avdyeeich had lived long in that one place, and had many acquaintances. Few indeed were the boots in that neighborhood which had not passed through his hands at some time or other. On some he would fasten new soles, to others he would give side-pieces, others again he would stitch all round, and even give them new uppers if need be. And often he saw his own handiwork through the window. There was always lots of work for him, for Avdyeeich's hand was cunning and his leather good; he did not overcharge, and he always kept his word. He always engaged to do a job by a fixed time if he could; but if he could not, he said so at once, and deceived no man. So everyone knew Avdyeeich, and he had no lack of work. Avdyeeich had always been a pretty good man, but as he grew old he began to think more about his soul, and draw nearer to his God. While Martin was still a journeyman his wife had died; but his wife had left him a little boy—three years old. Their other children

had not lived. All the eldest had died early. Martin wished at first to send his little child into the country to his sister, but afterward he thought better of it. "My Kapitoshka," thought he, "will feel miserable in a strange household. He shall stay here with me." And so Avdyeeich left his master, and took to living in lodgings alone with his little son. But God did not give Avdyeeich happiness in his children. No sooner had the little one begun to grow up and be a help and a joy to his father's heart, than a sickness fell upon Kapitoshka; the little one took to his bed, lay there in a raging fever for a week, and then died. Martin buried his son in despair—so desperate was he that he began to murmur against God. Such disgust of life overcame him that he more than once begged God that he might die; and he reproached God for taking not him, an old man, but his darling, his only son, instead. And after that Avdyeeich left off going to church.

And, lo! one day there came to Avdyeeich from the Troitsa Monastery an aged peasant-pilgrim—it was already the eighth year of his pilgrimage. Avdyeeich fell a-talking with him, and began to complain of his great sorrow. "As for living any longer, thou man of God," said he, "I desire it not. Would only that I might die! That is my sole prayer to God. I am now a man who has no hope."

And the old man said to him: "Thy speech, Martin, is not good. How shall we judge the doings of God? God's judgments are not our thoughts. God willed that thy son should die, but that thou shouldst live. Therefore 'twas the best thing both for him and for thee. It is because thou wouldst fain have lived for thy own delight that thou dost now despair."

"But what then *is* a man to live for?" asked Avdyeeich.

And the old man answered: "For God, Martin! He gave thee life, and for Him therefore must thou live. When thou dost begin to live for Him, thou wilt grieve about nothing more, and all things will come easy to thee."

Martin was silent for a moment, and then he said: "And how must one live for God?"

• "Christ hath shown us the way. Thou knowest thy letters.

Buy the Gospels and read; there thou wilt find out how to live for God. There everything is explained."

These words made the heart of Avdyeeich burn within him, and he went the same day and bought for himself a New Testament printed in very large type, and began to read.

Avdyeeich set out with the determination to read it only on holidays; but as he read, it did his heart so much good that he took to reading it every day. And the second time he read until all the kerosene in the lamp had burnt itself out, and for all that he could not tear himself away from the book. And so it was every evening. And the more he read, the more clearly he understood what God wanted of him, and how it behooved him to live for God; and his heart grew lighter and lighter continually. Formerly, whenever he lay down to sleep he would only sigh and groan, and think of nothing but Kapitoshka, but now he would only say to himself: "Glory to Thee! Glory to Thee, O Lord! Thy will be done!"

Henceforth the whole life of Avdyeeich was changed. Formerly, whenever he had a holiday, he would go to the tavern to drink tea, nor would he say "no" to a drop of brandy now and again. He would tipple with his comrades, and though not actually drunk would, for all that, leave the inn a bit merry, babbling nonsense and talking loudly and censoriously. He had done with all that now. His life became quiet and joyful. With the morning light he sat down to his work, worked out his time, then took down his lamp from the hook, placed it on the table, took down his book from the shelf, bent over it, and sat him down to read. And the more he read the more he understood, and his heart grew brighter and happier.

It happened once that Martin was up reading till very late. He was reading St. Luke's Gospel. He was reading the sixth chapter, and as he read he came to the words: "And to him that smiteth thee on the one cheek, offer also the other." This passage he read several times, and presently he came to that place where the Lord says: "And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Whosoever cometh to Me, and heareth My sayings, and

doeth them, I will show you whom he is like. He is like a man which built an house, and dug deep, and laid the foundations on a rock. And when the flood arose, the storm beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the sand, against which the storm did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great."

Avdyeeich read these words through and through, and his heart was glad. He took off his glasses, laid them on the book, rested his elbow on the table, and fell a-thinking. And he began to measure his own life by these words. And he thought to himself, "Is my house built on the rock or on the sand? How good to be as on a rock! How easy it all seems to thee sitting alone here! It seems as if thou wert doing God's will to the full, and so thou takest no heed and fallest away again. And yet thou wouldst go on striving, for so it is good for thee. O Lord, help me!" Thus thought he, and would have laid him down, but it was a grief to tear himself away from the book. And so he began reading the seventh chapter. He read all about the Centurion, he read all about the Widow's Son, he read all about the answer to the disciples of St. John; and so he came to that place where the rich Pharisee invited our Lord to be his guest. And he read all about how the woman who was a sinner anointed His feet and washed them with her tears, and how He justified her. And so he came at last to the forty-fourth verse, and there he read these words, "And He turned to the woman and said to Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest Me no water for My feet; but she has washed My feet with tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest Me no kiss, but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss My feet. Mine head with oil thou didst not anoint." And again Avdyeeich took off his glasses and laid them on the book, and fell a-thinking.

"So it is quite plain that I, too, have something of the Pharisee about me. Am I not always thinking of myself? Am I not always thinking of drinking tea, and keeping myself as warm and cosy as possible, without thinking at all about the guest? Simon

thought about himself, but did not give the slightest thought to his guest. But who was his guest? The Lord Himself. And suppose He were to come to me, should I treat Him as the Pharisee did?"

And Avdyeeich leaned both his elbows on the table and, without perceiving it, fell a-dozing.

"Martin!"—it was as the voice of someone close to his ear.

Martin started up from his nap. "Who's there?"

He turned round, he gazed at the door, but there was no one. Again he dozed off. Suddenly he heard quite plainly:

"Martin, Martin, I say! Look tomorrow into the street. I am coming."

Martin awoke, rose from his chair, and began to rub his eyes. And he did not know himself whether he had heard these words asleep or awake. He turned down the lamp and laid him down to rest.

At dawn next day Avdyeeich arose, prayed to God, lit his stove, got ready his gruel and cabbage soup, filled his samovar, put on his apron, and sat him down by his window to work. There Avdyeeich sits and works, and thinks of nothing but the things of yesternight. His thoughts were divided. He thought at one time that he must have gone off dozing, and then again he thought he really must have heard that voice. It might have been so, thought he.

Martin sits at the window and looks as much at his window as at his work, and whenever a strange pair of boots passes by, he bends forward and looks out of the window, so as to see the face as well as the feet of the passers-by. The house porter passed by in new felt boots, the water-carrier passed by, and after that there passed close to the window an old soldier, one of Nicholas's¹ veterans, in tattered old boots, with a shovel in his hands. Avdyeeich knew him by his boots. The old fellow was called Stepanuich, and lived with the neighboring shopkeeper, who harbored him of his charity. His duty was to help the porter. Stepanuich stopped before Avdyeeich's window to sweep away the snow. Avdyeeich cast a glance at him, and then went on working as before.

¹ Nicholas: the Czar of Russia.

"I'm not growing sager as I grow older," thought Avdyeeich, with some self-contempt. "I make up my mind that Christ is coming to me, and, lo! 'tis only Stepanuich clearing away the snow. Thou simpleton thou! thou art wool-gathering!" Then Avdyeeich made ten more stitches, and then he stretched his head once more toward the window. He looked through the window again, and there he saw that Stepanuich had placed the shovel against the wall, and was warming himself and taking breath a bit.

"The old man is very much broken," thought Avdyeeich to himself. "It is quite plain that he has scarcely strength enough to scrape away the snow. Suppose I make him drink a little tea! The samovar, too, is just on the boil." Avdyeeich put down his awl, got up, placed the samovar on the table, put some tea in it, and tapped on the window with his fingers. Stepanuich turned round and came to the window. Avdyeeich beckoned to him, and then went and opened the door.

"Come in and warm yourself a bit," cried he. "You're a bit chilled, eh?"

"Christ requite you! Yes, and all my bones ache, too," said Stepanuich. Stepanuich came in, shook off the snow, and began to wipe his feet so as not to soil the floor, but he tottered sadly.

"Don't trouble about wiping your feet. I'll rub it off myself. It's all in the day's work. Come in and sit down," said Avdyeeich. "Here, take a cup of tea."

And Avdyeeich filled two cups, and gave one to his guest, and he poured his own tea out into the saucer and began to blow it.

Stepanuich drank his cup, turned it upside down, put a gnawed crust on the top of it, and said, "Thank you." But it was quite plain that he wanted to be asked to have some more.

"Have a drop more. Do!" said Avdyeeich, and poured out fresh cups for his guest and himself, and as Avdyeeich drank his cup, he could not help glancing at the window from time to time.

"Dost thou expect anyone?" asked his guest.

"Do I expect anyone? Well, honestly, I hardly know. I am expecting, and I am not expecting, and there's a word which has burnt itself right into my heart. Whether it was a vision or no, I

know not. Look now, my brother! I was reading yesterday about our little Father Christ, how He suffered, how He came on earth. Hast thou heard of Him, eh?"

"I have heard, I have heard," replied Stepanuich, "but we poor ignorant ones know not our letters."

"Anyhow, I was reading about this very thing—how He came down upon earth. I was reading how He went to the Pharisee, and how the Pharisee did not receive Him at all. Thus I thought, and so, about yesternight, little brother mine, I read that very thing, and bethought me how the Honorable did not receive our little Father Christ honorably. But suppose, I thought, if He came to one like me—would I receive Him? Simon, at any rate, did not receive Him at all. Thus I thought, and so thinking, fell asleep. I fell asleep, I say, little brother mine, and I heard my name called. I started up. A voice was whispering at my very ear. 'Look out tomorrow!' it said, 'I am coming.' And so it befell twice. Now look! wouldst thou believe it? the idea stuck to me— I scold myself for my folly, and yet I look for Him, our little Father Christ!"

Stepanuich shook his head and said nothing, but he drank his cup dry and put it aside. Then Avdyeeich took up the cup and filled it again.

"Drink some more. 'Twill do thee good. Now it seems to me that when our little Father went about on earth, He despised no one, but sought unto the simple folk most of all. He was always among the simple folk. Those disciples of His, too, He chose most of them from amongst our brother-laborers, sinners like unto us. He that exalteth himself, He says, shall be abased, and he that abaseth himself shall be exalted. Ye, says He, call me Lord, and I, says He, wash your feet. He who would be the first among you, He says, let him become the servant of all. And therefore it is that He says, Blessed are the lowly, the peacemakers, the humble, and the long-suffering."

Stepanuich forgot his tea. He was an old man, soft-hearted and tearful. He sat and listened, and the tears rolled down his cheeks.

"Come, drink a little more," said Avdyeeich. But Stepanuich crossed himself, expressed his thanks, pushed away his cup, and got up.

"I thank thee, Martin Avdyeeich," said he. "I have fared well at thy hands, and thou hast refreshed me both in body and soul."

"Thou wilt show me a kindness by coming again. I am very glad to have a guest," said Avdyeeich. Stepanuich departed, and Martin poured out the last drop of tea, drank it, washed up, and again sat down by the window to work—he had some back stitching to do. He stitched and stitched, and now and then cast glances at the window—he was looking for Christ, and could think of nothing but Him and His works. And the divers sayings of Christ were in his head all the time.

Two soldiers passed by, one in regimental boots, the other in boots of his own making; after that, the owner of the next house passed by in nicely brushed goloshes. A baker with a basket also passed by. All these passed by in turn, and then there came alongside the window a woman in worsted stockings and rustic shoes, and as she was passing by she stopped short in front of the partition wall. Avdyeeich looked up at her from his window, and he saw that the woman was a stranger and poorly clad, and that she had a little child with her. She was leaning up against the wall with her back to the wind, and tried to wrap the child up, but she had nothing to wrap it up with. The woman wore summer clothes, and thin enough they were. And from out of his corner Avdyeeich heard the child crying and the woman trying to comfort it, but she could not. Then Avdyeeich got up, went out of the door and on to the steps, and cried, "My good woman! my good woman!"

The woman heard him and turned round

"Why dost thou stand out in the cold there with the child? Come inside! In the warm room thou wilt be better able to tend him. This way!"

The woman was amazed. What she saw was an old fellow in an apron and with glasses on his nose, calling to her. She came toward him.

They went down the steps together—they went into the room. The old man led the woman to the bed. "There," said he, "sit

down, gossip, nearer to the stove, and warm and feed thy little one . . .”

He went to the table, got some bread and a dish, opened the oven door, put some cabbage soup into the dish, took out a pot of gruel, but it was not quite ready, so he put some cabbage soup only into the dish, and placed it on the table. Then he fetched bread, took down the cloth from the hook, and spread it on the table.

“Sit down and have something to eat, gossip,” said he, “and I will sit down a little with the youngster. I have had children of my own, and know how to manage them”

The woman crossed herself, sat down at the table, and began to eat, and Avdyeeich sat down on the bed with the child. Avdyeeich smacked his lips at him again and again, but his lack of teeth made it a clumsy joke at best. And all the time the child never left off shrieking. Then Avdyeeich hit upon the idea of shaking his finger at him, so he snapped his fingers up and down, backwards and forwards, right in front of the child’s mouth, because his finger was black and sticky with cobbler’s wax. And the child stared at the finger and was silent, and presently it began to laugh. And Avdyeeich was delighted. But the woman went on eating, and told him who she was and whence she came.

“I am a soldier’s wife,” she said. “My eight months’ husband they drove right away from me, and nothing has been heard of him since. I took a cook’s place till I became a mother. They could not keep me and the child. It is now three months since I have been drifting about without any fixed resting-place. I have eaten away my all. I wanted to be a wet-nurse, but people wouldn’t have me: ‘Thou art too thin,’ they said. I have just been to the merchant’s wife where our grandmother lives, and there they promised to take me in. I thought it was all right, but she told me to come again in a week. But she lives a long way off. I am chilled to death, and he is quite tired out. But, God be praised! our landlady has compassion on us, and gives us shelter for Christ’s sake. But for that I don’t know how we could live through it all.”

Avdyeeich sighed, and said, “And have you no warm clothes?”

“Ah, kind friend! this is indeed warm-clothes time, but yesterday I pawned away my last shawl for two *grivenki*.”

The woman went to the bed and took up the child, but Avdyeeich stood up, went to the wall cupboard, rummaged about a bit, and then brought back with him an old jacket.

"Look!" said he. "'Tis a shabby thing, 'tis true, but it will do to wrap up in."

The woman looked at the old jacket, then she gazed at the old man, and, taking the jacket, fell a-weeping. Avdyeeich also turned away, crept under the bed, drew out a trunk, and seemed to be very busy about it, whereupon he again sat down opposite the woman.

Then the woman said: "Christ requite thee, dear little father! It is plain that it was He who sent me by thy window. When I first came out it was warm, and now it has turned very cold. And He it was, little father, who made thee look out of the window and have compassion on wretched me."

Avdyeeich smiled slightly, and said: "Yes, He must have done it, for I looked not out of the window in vain, dear gossip!"

And Avdyeeich told his dream to the soldier's wife also, and how he had heard a voice promising that the Lord should come to him that day.

"All things are possible," said the woman. Then she rose up, put on the jacket, wrapped it round her little one, and then began to curtsy and thank Avdyeeich once more.

"Take this for Christ's sake," said Avdyeeich, giving her a two-*grivenka* piece, "and redeem your shawl." The woman crossed herself, Avdyeeich crossed himself, and then he led the woman to the door.

The woman went away. Avdyeeich ate up the remainder of the cabbage soup, washed up, and again sat down to work. He worked on and on, but he did not forget the window, and whenever the window was darkened he immediately looked up to see who was passing. Acquaintances passed, strangers passed, but there was no one in particular.

But now Avdyeeich sees how, right in front of his window, an old woman, a huckster, has taken her stand. She carries a basket of apples. Not many now remained; she had evidently sold them nearly all. Across her shoulder she carried a sack full of shavings.

She must have picked them up near some new building, and was taking them home with her. It was plain that the sack was straining her shoulder. She wanted to shift it on to the other shoulder, so she rested the sack on the pavement, placed the apple-basket on a small post, and set about shaking down the shavings in the sack. Now while she was shaking down the sack, an urchin in a ragged cap suddenly turned up, goodness knows from whence, grabbed at one of the apples in the basket, and would have made off with it, but the wary old woman turned quickly round and gripped the youth by the sleeve. The lad fought and tried to tear himself loose, but the old woman seized him with both hands, knocked his hat off, and tugged hard at his hair. The lad howled, and the old woman reviled him. Avdyeeich ran out into the street.

The old woman was tugging at the lad's hair and wanted to drag him off to the police, while the boy fought and kicked.

"I didn't take it," said he. "What are you whacking me for? Let me go!"

Avdyeeich came up and tried to part them. He seized the lad by the arm and said: "Let him go, little mother! Forgive him for Christ's sake!"

"I'll forgive him so that he shan't forget the taste of fresh birch-rods. I mean to take the rascal to the police station."

Avdyeeich began to entreat with the old woman.

"Let him go, little mother; he will not do so any more. Let him go for Christ's sake."

The old woman let him go. The lad would have bolted, but Avdyeeich held him fast.

"Beg the little mother's pardon," said he, "and don't do such things any more. I saw thee take them."

Then the lad began to cry and beg pardon.

"Well, that's all right! And now, there's an apple for thee." And Avdyeeich took one out of the basket and gave it to the boy. "I'll pay thee for it, little mother," he said to the old woman.

"Thou wilt ruin them that way, the blackguards," said the old woman. "If I had the rewarding of him, he should not be able to sit down for a week."

"Oh, little mother, little mother!" cried Avdyeeich, "that is our

way of looking at things, but it is not God's way. If he ought to be whipped so for the sake of one apple, what do we deserve for our sins?"

The old woman was silent.

And Avdyeeich told the old woman about the parable of the master who forgave his servant a very great debt, and how that servant immediately went out and caught his fellow-servant by the throat because he was his debtor. The old woman listened to the end, and the lad listened, too.

"God bade us forgive," said Avdyeeich, "otherwise He will not forgive us. We must forgive everyone, especially the thoughtless."

The old woman shook her head and sighed.

"That's all very well," she said, "but they are spoiled enough already."

"Then it is for us old people to teach them better," said Avdyeeich.

"So say I," replied the old woman. "I had seven of them at one time, and now I have but a single daughter left." And the old woman began telling him where and how she lived with her daughter, and how many grandchildren she had. "I'm not what I was," she said, "but I work all I can. I am sorry for my grandchildren, and good children they are, too. No one is so glad to see me as they are. Little Aksyutka will go to none but me 'Grandma dear! darling grandma!'" and the old woman was melted to tears. "As for him," she added, pointing to the lad, "boys will be boys, I suppose. Well, God be with him!"

Now just as the old woman was about to hoist the sack on to her shoulder, the lad rushed forward and said:

"Give it here and I'll carry it for thee, granny! It is all in my way."

The old woman shook her head, but she did put the sack on the lad's shoulder.

And so they trudged down the street together side by side. And the old woman forgot to ask Avdyeeich for the money for the apple. Avdyeeich kept standing and looking after them, and heard how they talked to each other, as they went, about all sorts of things.

Avdyeeich followed them with his eyes till they were out of sight, then he turned homeward and found his glasses on the steps (they were not broken), picked up his awl, and sat down to work again. He worked away for a little while, but soon he was scarcely able to distinguish the stitches, and saw the lamplighter going round to light the lamps. "I see it is time to light up," thought he, so he trimmed his little lamp, lighted it, and again sat down to work. He finished one boot completely, turned it round and inspected it. "Good!" he cried. He put away his tools, swept up the cuttings, removed the brushes and tips, put away the awl, took down the lamp, placed it on the table, and took down the Gospels from the shelf. He wanted to find the passage where he had last evening placed a strip of morocco leather by way of marker, but he lit upon another place. And just as Avdyeeich opened the Gospels, he recollected his dream of yesterday evening. And no sooner did he call it to mind than it seemed to him as if some persons were moving about and shuffling with their feet behind him. Avdyeeich glanced round and saw that somebody was indeed standing in the dark corner—yes, someone was really there, but who he could not exactly make out. Then a voice whispered in his ear:

"Martin! Martin! dost thou not know me?"

"Who art thou?" cried Avdyeeich.

"'Tis I," cried the voice, "lo, 'tis I!" And forth from the dark corner stepped Stepanuich. He smiled, and it was as though a little cloud were breaking, and he was gone.

"It is I!" cried the voice, and forth from the corner stepped a woman with a little child; and the woman smiled and the child laughed, and they also disappeared.

"And it is I!" cried the voice, and the old woman and the lad with the apple stepped forth, and both of them smiled, and they also disappeared.

And the heart of Avdyeeich was glad. He crossed himself, put on his glasses, and began to read the Gospels at the place where he had opened them. And at the top of the page he read these words: "And I was an hungered and thirsty, and ye gave Me to drink. I was a stranger, and ye took Me in."

And at the bottom of the page he read this: "Inasmuch as ye

have done it to the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

And Avdyeeich understood that his dream had not deceived him, and that the Saviour had really come to him that day, and he had really received Him.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. The aged peasant-pilgrim changes Avdyeeich's whole manner of life. What did he say was the cause of Avdyeeich's despair? What was the cure?

2. The pilgrim urged Avdyeeich to read the New Testament to discover how to live for God. What specific passages are quoted? Discuss in class what each passage really means. You may find some difference of opinion.

3. Why did Avdyeeich help Stepanuich and the poor woman with the child?

4. Why did he help the bad boy who had stolen the apple? Do you agree with him or with the old woman?

5. Use the dictionary for: journeyman, fain, censoriously, samovar, abased, requite, huckster, reviled.

SOMETHING TO DO

Bring a copy of the New Testament and read to the class the incidents and the parables mentioned in the story: the Centurion, the Widow's Son, Jesus' answer to the disciples of St. John, the rich Pharisee, the Last Judgment. Try to state the significant truths about life that each of these passages illustrates.

FOR FURTHER READING: THEME

Björnsterne Björnsen	.....	The Father
Erskine Caldwell	. . . . .	The People vs. Abe Lathan, Colored
Anton Chekov	.....	The Bet
Walter S. Havighurst	.. . . .	The Suicide Ship
Nathaniel Hawthorne	.....	Dr. Heidegger's Experiment The Great Stone Face The Minister's Black Veil
Robert McLaughlin	. . . . .	A Short Wait Between Trains
Edgar Valentine Smith	. . . . .	Lijah
Harry Sylvester	.....	Eight-Oared Crew
Leo N. Tolstoy	.....	Three Arshins of Land

SATIRE

SOMETIMES a writer wishes to pass judgment on some person or some mode of conduct. If the judgment is disapproval, one of the most effective methods of attack is the use of *satire*. This device consists of holding up to ridicule the person or mode of conduct the writer thinks deserves such treatment. Sometimes the satire is kindly, and though we laugh at the victim, we recognize the writer's good-humor which tempers the scorn. Sometimes the writer has no intention of being kindly, and frankly sneers at his victim.

There is danger of your missing the satire in a story—especially when the author has injected it so good-naturedly and so lightly that his disapproval is anything but obvious. Or you may miss it if the person ridiculed does not seem ridiculous to you. Your appreciation of satire will depend upon your alertness to the tone of the author's writing and upon the maturity of your own judgments of character and behavior.

THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

Hans Christian Andersen

(Translated by *Paul Leyssac*)

Although in America the stories of Hans Christian Andersen are read mostly by children, Andersen's famous "fairy tales" were written primarily for adults. And it is very doubtful whether most children are capable of appreciating the witty satire of these delightful yarns.

Hans Christian Andersen meant his stories to be read aloud. He himself was always reading them—mainly to adult audiences. They are written in a colloquial style, full of the unexpected turn of phrase of the spoken word, which can be fully appreciated only by an oral reading. But even the silent reader can appreciate the light, humorous touch with which he so skilfully satirizes human frailties.

"The Emperor's New Clothes" is one of Andersen's most famous stories. Even if you read it as a "fairy tale," when you were quite young, read it again—this time as an excellent example of amusing adult satire.

MANY years ago there lived an Emperor who was so exceedingly fond of fine new clothes that he spent all his money on being elaborately dressed. He took no interest in his soldiers, no interest in the theater, nor did he care to drive about in his state coach, unless it were to show off his new clothes. He had different robes for every hour of the day, and just as one says of a King that he is in his Council Chamber, people always said of him, "The Emperor is in his wardrobe!"

The great city in which he lived was full of gaiety. Strangers were always coming and going. One day two swindlers arrived; they made themselves out to be weavers, and said they knew how to weave the most magnificent fabric that one could imagine. Not

only were the colors and patterns unusually beautiful, but the clothes that were made of this material had the extraordinary quality of becoming invisible to everyone who was either unfit for his post, or inexcusably stupid.

"What useful clothes to have!" thought the Emperor. "If I had some like that, I might find out which of the people in my Empire are unfit for their posts. I should also be able to distinguish the wise from the fools. Yes, that material must be woven for me immediately!" Then he gave the swindlers large sums of money so that they could start work at once.

Quickly they set up two looms and pretended to weave, but there was not a trace of anything on the frames. They made no bones about demanding the finest silk and the purest gold thread. They stuffed everything into their bags, and continued to work at the empty looms until late into the night.

"I'm rather anxious to know how much of the material is finished," thought the Emperor, but to tell the truth, he felt a bit uneasy, remembering that anyone who was either a fool or unfit for his post would never be able to see it. He rather imagined that he need not have any fear for himself, yet he thought it wise to send someone else first to see how things were going. Everyone in the town knew about the exceptional powers of the material, and all were eager to know how incompetent or how stupid their neighbors might be.

"I will send my honest old Chamberlain to the weavers," thought the Emperor. "He will be able to judge the fabric better than anyone else, for he has brains, and nobody fills his post better than he does."

So the nice old Chamberlain went into the hall where the two swindlers were sitting working at the empty looms.

"Upon my life!" he thought, opening his eyes very wide, "I can't see anything at all!" But he didn't say so.

Both the swindlers begged him to be good enough to come nearer, and asked how he liked the unusual design and the splendid colors. They pointed to the empty looms, and the poor old Chamberlain opened his eyes wider and wider, but he could see nothing, for there was nothing. "Heavens above!" he thought, "could it pos-

sibly be that I am stupid? I have never thought that of myself, and not a soul must know it. Could it be that I am not fit for my post? It will never do for me to admit that I can't see the material!"

"Well, you don't say what you think of it," said one of the weavers.

"Oh, it's delightful—most exquisite!" said the old Chamberlain, looking through his spectacles. "What a wonderful design and what beautiful colors! I shall certainly tell the Emperor that I am enchanted with it."

"We're very pleased to hear that," said the two weavers, and they started describing the colors and the curious pattern. The old Chamberlain listened carefully in order to repeat, when he came home to the Emperor, exactly what he had heard, and he did so.

The swindlers now demanded more money, as well as more silk and gold thread, saying that they needed it for weaving. They put everything into their pockets and not a thread appeared upon the looms, but they kept on working at the empty frames as before.

Soon after this, the Emperor sent another nice official to see how the weaving was getting on, and to enquire whether the stuff would soon be ready. Exactly the same thing happened to him as to the Chamberlain. He looked and looked, but as there was nothing to be seen except the empty looms, he could see nothing.

"Isn't it a beautiful piece of material?" said the swindlers, showing and describing the pattern that did not exist at all.

"Stupid I certainly am not," thought the official; "then I must be unfit for my excellent post, I suppose. That seems rather funny—but I'll take great care that nobody gets wind of it." Then he praised the material he could not see, and assured them of his enthusiasm for the gorgeous colors and the beautiful pattern. "It's simply enchanting!" he said to the Emperor.

The whole town was talking about the splendid material.

And now the Emperor was curious to see it for himself while it was still upon the looms.

Accompanied by a great number of selected people, among whom were the two nice old officials who had already been there, the Emperor went forth to visit the two wily swindlers. They

were now weaving madly, yet without a single thread upon the looms.

"Isn't it magnificent?" said the two nice officials. "Will Your Imperial Majesty deign to look at this splendid pattern and these glorious colors?" Then they pointed to the empty looms, for each thought that the others could probably see the material.

"What on earth can this mean?" thought the Emperor. "I don't see anything! This is terrible. Am I stupid? Am I unfit to be Emperor? That would be the most disastrous thing that could possibly befall me.—Oh, it's perfectly wonderful!" he said. "It quite meets with my Imperial approval." And he nodded appreciatively and stared at the empty looms—he would not admit that he saw nothing. His whole suite looked and looked, but with as little result as the others; nevertheless, they all said, like the Emperor, "It's perfectly wonderful!" They advised him to have some new clothes made from this splendid stuff and to wear them for the first time in the next great procession.

"Magnificent!" "Excellent!" "Prodigious!" went from mouth to mouth, and everyone was exceedingly pleased. The Emperor gave each of the swindlers a decoration to wear in his button-hole, and the title of "Knight of the Loom."

Before the procession they worked all night, burning more than sixteen candles. People could see how busy they were finishing the Emperor's new clothes. They pretended to take the material from the looms, they slashed the air with great scissors, they sewed with needles without any thread, and finally they said, "The Emperor's clothes are ready!"

Then the Emperor himself arrived with his most distinguished courtiers, and each swindler raised an arm as if he were holding something, and said, "These are Your Imperial Majesty's knee-breeches. This is Your Imperial Majesty's robe. This is Your Imperial Majesty's mantle," and so forth. "It is all as light as a spider's web, one might fancy one had nothing on, but that is just the beauty of it!"

"Yes, indeed," said all the courtiers, but they could see nothing, for there was nothing to be seen.

"If Your Imperial Majesty would graciously consent to take off

your clothes," said the swindlers, "we could fit on the new ones in front of the long glass."

So the Emperor laid aside his clothes, and the swindlers pretended to hand him, piece by piece, the new ones they were supposed to have made, and they fitted him round the waist, and acted as if they were fastening something on—it was the train; and the Emperor turned round and round in front of the long glass.

"How well the new robes suit Your Imperial Majesty! How well they fit!" they all said. "What a splendid design! What gorgeous colors! It's all magnificently regal!"

"The canopy which is to be held over Your Imperial Majesty in the procession is waiting outside," announced the Lord High Chamberlain.

"Well, I suppose I'm ready," said the Emperor. "Don't you think they are a nice fit?" And he looked at himself again in the glass, first on one side and then the other, as if he really were carefully examining his handsome attire.

The courtiers who were to carry the train groped about on the floor with fumbling fingers, and pretended to lift it, they walked on, holding their hands up in the air; nothing would have induced them to admit that they could not see anything.

And so the Emperor set off in the procession under the beautiful canopy, and everybody in the streets and at the windows said, "Oh! how superb the Emperor's new clothes are! What a gorgeous train! What a perfect fit!" No one would acknowledge that he didn't see anything, so proving that he was not fit for his post, or that he was very stupid.

None of the Emperor's clothes had ever met with such a success.

"But he hasn't got any clothes on!" gasped out a little child.

"Good heavens! Hark at the little innocent!" said the father, and people whispered to one another what the child had said. "But he hasn't got any clothes on! There's a little child saying he hasn't got any clothes on!"

"But he hasn't got any clothes on!" shouted the whole town at last. The Emperor had a creepy feeling down his spine, because it began to dawn upon him that the people were right. "All the

same," he thought to himself, "I've got to go through with it as long as the procession lasts."

So he drew himself up and held his head higher than before, and the courtiers held on to the train that wasn't there at all.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

List the qualities of human nature satirized in this story. Which one seems to you to be the main target for the satire?

SOMETHING TO DO

Read aloud to the class some other Hans Christian Andersen satirical stories. One in which the satire is obvious is "It's Perfectly True"; one in which the satire may easily be missed is "The Princess on the Pea." Both of these stories are very short.

A good collection of Andersen stories is *It's Perfectly True*, with translations by Paul Leyssac. The version of "The Emperor's New Clothes" which you have just read is one of Mr. Leyssac's translations.

FOR FURTHER READING: SATIRE AND IRONY

Konrad Bercovici	.....	"There's Money in Poetry"
Katharine Brush	.....	Night Club
Martha Foley	.....	Samarkand
E. M. Forster	..	Mr. and Mrs. Abbey's Difficulties
John Galsworthy	.....	The Pack
Lao Hsiang	.....	A Country Boy Withdraws from School
Katherine Mansfield	.....	The Fly
Robert Nathan	... ..	Death in the Stadium
John O'Hara	.....	Mrs. Whitman Walter T. Carriman
Dorothy Parker	.....	Arrangement in Black and White
William Saroyan	.....	The Fifty-Yard Dash
Lao She	.....	The Philanthropist
Ling Shu-hua	..	The Helpmate
James Thurber	.....	The Greatest Man in the World The Macbeth Murder Mystery
Edith Wharton	..	Xingu
Thomas Wolfe	.....	One of the Girls in Our Party

*MORE FULL-LENGTH
SHORT STORIES*

THE ART OF THE SHORT STORY

THE purpose in Part One of this book was to show you the chief sources of pleasure and profit in the reading of short stories. Each of these sources was clearly identified. Each story included there was chosen because of its usefulness in teaching one of these story elements, such as plot, theme, humor, atmosphere, satire.

In Part Two you will find more stories, not different in kind from those in Part One. They contain the same story elements, and the authors employ the same devices. If any narrative element in Part One still seems vague to you, some story in Part Two may clarify it. If any element seems unimportant, perhaps some story in Part Two will bring out its significance. Thus the study of these additional stories will help you to clinch what you have learned in Part One.

But Part Two should be more than a review. It should also provide an advance beyond Part One. Now that plot and setting and character are clearly understood and familiar to you, you should learn to observe how all three contribute to one single effect, which the author has decided on before he begins to write. It is a hundred-year-old principle that in a short story the writer's aim should be to build up a central impression, to create a single effect upon the reader. In 1842 Nathaniel Hawthorne published a book of short stories, called *Twice-Told Tales*. Edgar Allan Poe, who was then editing a literary magazine, reviewed Hawthorne's book. In his book review Poe set forth the principle of the single effect in a clear-cut way (and approved Hawthorne's stories because they obeyed this principle).

Now what does the principle of the single impression mean? It means that a story should do one thing, not two, or three. It means that the writer, seeking material for a story, must first decide what purpose he wishes to achieve. Does he wish to surprise

the reader? Does he hope to make him laugh, or cry? Does he want him to approve of something, or of somebody—or to disapprove? Perhaps he merely wants to suggest that the observed bit of life is full of misery, or of happiness, or of excitement. Whatever his purpose may be, he must let it control all his writing—the kind of people in the story, the things they do, the places where they do them, even the language that tells about their doings. Every word must drive toward that single impression the author hopes to make on the reader.

The success with which Poe achieved this singleness of effect is the quality for which his stories have been chiefly admired. Modern readers and writers have sometimes felt that his stories were too artificial, made too mechanically, not faithful enough to the real life of ordinary persons. But for all their objections, they still believe in and practice Poe's principle of the single effect. You see, the short story (unlike the novel) is too short to do more than one thing well; and in order that it shall achieve that one thing, all of the narrative elements must be unified. If this requirement seems rigorous to you, it is all the more reason for respecting those who have successfully met the test. To create a really good short story is not an easy task. All credit to the few who can do it.

So, in reading Part Two, I expect you to try to determine, for each story, what single effect the author was aiming at, and to consider how good his aim was. In short, how well did he succeed in making action, characters, setting, theme—all the story elements—concentrate on a single impression? This is what most people mean when they speak of the "Art" of the short story. The study of Part Two should make clear the significance of Poe's principle of the single impression, and enable you to perceive and enjoy the unity of effect in a good short story. If it does this, it will have made a contribution of its own to your future pleasure and profit in reading.

Furthermore, if some of the authors endear themselves to you, I hope you will be encouraged to hunt out other stories by these same authors. If they belong to an earlier age, look for their names in the short-story anthologies. If they are living writers,

make a habit of watching for their names in the magazines. In short, I hope that the stories in my book will whet your appetite. May your reading of them lead you to start exploring on your own the many short stories (and novels, too) available to you in bookstores and libraries.

But the study of Part Two should not be merely preparation for future valuable experience. It should be a series of experiences pleasant and profitable in themselves—here and now. In the stories that follow you will find humor and vicarious adventure, tests of your mental alertness in surprise endings and detective stories, glimpses of foreign traditions and customs, clear insights into human nature, suggestions of the problems in the democratic way of life—all the many elements which make the reading of fiction a rich and important experience.

THE RANSOM OF RED CHIEF

O. Henry (William Sydney Porter)

This story is one of the classics of American humor. I have read it many times and have never failed to enjoy the reading. It is a particularly good story for reading aloud.

IT LOOKED like a good thing: but wait till I tell you. We were down South, in Alabama—Bill Driscoll and myself—when this kidnapping idea struck us. It was, as Bill afterward expressed it, “during a moment of temporary mental apparition”; but we didn’t find that out till later.

There was a town down there, as flat as a flannel-cake, and called Summit, of course. It contained inhabitants of as undeleterious and self-satisfied a class of peasantry as ever clustered around a Maypole.

Bill and me had a joint capital of about six hundred dollars, and we needed just two thousand dollars more to pull off a fraudulent town-lot scheme in Western Illinois with. We talked it over on the front steps of the hotel. Philoprogenitiveness,¹ says we, is strong in semi-rural communities; therefore, and for other reasons, a kidnapping project ought to do better there than in the radius of newspapers that send reporters out in plain clothes to stir up talk about such things. We knew that Summit couldn’t get after us with anything stronger than constables and, maybe, some lackadaisical bloodhounds and a diatribe or two in the *Weekly Farmers’ Budget*. So, it looked good.

We selected for our victim the only child of a prominent citizen named Ebenezer Dorset. The father was respectable and tight, a mortgage fancier and a stern, upright collection-plate passer and

¹ philoprogenitiveness: love of offspring

forecloser. The kid was a boy of ten, with bas-relief freckles and hair the color of the cover of the magazine you buy at the news stand when you want to catch a train. Bill and me figured that Ebenezer would melt down for a ransom of two thousand dollars to a cent. But wait till I tell you.

About two miles from Summit was a little mountain, covered with a dense cedar brake. On the rear elevation of this mountain was a cave. There we stored provisions.

One evening after sundown we drove in a buggy past old Dorset's house. The kid was in the street, throwing rocks at a kitten on the opposite fence.

"Hey, little boy!" says Bill, "would you like to have a bag of candy and a nice ride?"

The boy catches Bill neatly in the eye with a piece of brick.

"That will cost the old man an extra five hundred dollars," says Bill, climbing over the wheel.

That boy put up a fight like a welter-weight cinnamon bear; but at last we got him down in the bottom of the buggy and drove away. We took him up to the cave, and I hitched the horse in the cedar brake. After dark I drove the buggy to the little village three miles away, where we had hired it, and walked back to the mountain.

Bill was pasting court-plaster over the scratches and bruises on his features. There was a fire burning behind the big rock at the entrance of the cave, and the boy was watching a pot of boiling coffee, with two buzzard tail-feathers stuck in his red hair. He points a stick at me when I come up and says:

"Ha! cursed paleface, do you dare to enter the camp of Red Chief, the terror of the plains?"

"He's all right now," says Bill, rolling up his trousers and examining some bruises on his shins. "We're playing Indian. We're making Buffalo Bill's show look like magic lantern views of Palestine in the town hall. I'm Old Hank, the Trapper, Red Chief's captive, and I'm to be scalped at daybreak. By Geronimo!² that kid can kick hard."

² **Geronimo** (jê rôn' i mō). an Apache Indian chief who went on the war-path in New Mexico and Arizona in the 1880's Bill uses his name as an oath

Yes, sir, that boy seemed to be having the time of his life. The fun of camping out in a cave had made him forget that he was a captive himself. He immediately christened me Snake-eye, the Spy, and announced that, when his braves returned from the war-path, I was to be broiled at the stake at the rising of the sun.

Then we had supper; and he filled his mouth full of bacon and bread and gravy, and began to talk. He made a during-dinner speech something like this:

"I like this fine. I never camped out before; but I had a pet 'possum once, and I was nine last birthday. I hate to go to school. Rats ate up sixteen of Jimmy Talbot's aunt's speckled hen's eggs. Are there any real Indians in these woods? I want some more gravy. Does the trees moving make the wind blow? We had five puppies. What makes your nose so red, Hank? My father has lots of money. Are the stars hot? I whipped Ed Walker twice, Saturday. I don't like girls. You dassent catch toads unless with a string. Do oxen make any noise? Why are oranges round? Have you got beds to sleep on in this cave? Amos Murray has got six toes. A parrot can talk, but a monkey or a fish can't. How many does it take to make twelve?"

Every few minutes he would remember that he was a pesky red-skin and pick up his stick rifle and tiptoe to the mouth of the cave to rubber for the scouts of the hated paleface. Now and then he would let out a war-whoop that made Old Hank, the Trapper, shiver. That boy had Bill terrorized from the start.

"Red Chief," says I to the kid, "would you like to go home?"

"Aw, what for?" says he. "I don't have any fun at home. I hate to go to school. I like to camp out. You won't take me back home again, Snake-eye, will you?"

"Not right away," says I. "We'll stay here in the cave a while."

"All right!" says he. "That'll be fine. I never had such fun in all my life."

We went to bed about eleven o'clock. We spread down some wide blankets and quilts and put Red Chief between us. We weren't afraid he'd run away. He kept us awake for three hours, jumping up and reaching for his rifle and screeching, "Hist! pard," in mine and Bill's ears, as the fancied crackle of a twig or the rustle

of a leaf revealed to his young imagination the stealthy approach of the outlaw band. At last I fell into a troubled sleep and dreamed that I had been kidnapped and chained to a tree by a ferocious pirate with red hair.

Just at daybreak I was awakened by a series of awful screams from Bill. They weren't yells, or howls, or shouts, or whoops, or yawps, such as you'd expect from a manly set of vocal organs—they were simply indecent, terrifying, humiliating screams, such as women emit when they see ghosts or caterpillars. It's an awful thing to hear a strong, desperate, fat man scream incontinently in a cave at daybreak.

I jumped up to see what the matter was. Red Chief was sitting on Bill's chest, with one hand twined in Bill's hair. In the other he had the sharp case-knife we used for slicing bacon, and he was industriously and realistically trying to take Bill's scalp, according to the sentence that had been pronounced upon him the evening before.

I got the knife away from the kid and made him lie down again. But from that moment Bill's spirit was broken. He laid down on his side of the bed, but he never closed an eye again in sleep as long as that boy was with us. I dozed off for a while, but along toward sun-up I remembered that Red Chief had said I was to be burned at the stake at the rising of the sun. I wasn't nervous or afraid; but I sat up and lit my pipe and leaned against a rock.

"What are you getting up so soon for, Sam?" asked Bill.

"Me?" says I. "Oh, I got a kind of a pain in my shoulder. I thought sitting up would rest it."

"You're a liar!" says Bill. "You're afraid. You was to be burned at sunrise, and you was afraid he'd do it. And he would, too, if he could find a match. Ain't it awful, Sam? Do you think anybody will pay out money to get a little imp like that back home?"

"Sure," said I. "A rowdy kid like that is just the kind that parents dote on. Now, you and the Chief get up and cook breakfast, while I go up on the top of this mountain and reconnoitre."

I went up on the peak on the little mountain and ran my eye over the contiguous vicinity. Over toward Summit I expected to see

the sturdy yeomanry of the village armed with scythes and pitchforks beating the countryside for the dastardly kidnappers. But what I saw was a peaceful landscape dotted with one man plowing with a dun mule. Nobody was dragging the creek; no couriers dashed hither and yon, bringing tidings of no news to the distracted parents. There was a sylvan attitude of somnolent sleepiness pervading that section of the external outward surface of Alabama that lay exposed to my view. "Perhaps," says I to myself, "it has not yet been discovered that the wolves have borne away the tender lambkin from the fold. Heaven help the wolves!" says I, and I went down the mountain to get breakfast.

When I got to the cave I found Bill backed up against the side of it, breathing hard, and the boy threatening to smash him with a rock half as big as a cocoanut.

"He put a red-hot boiled potato down my back," explained Bill, "and then mashed it with his foot; and I boxed his ears. Have you got a gun about you, Sam?"

I took the rock away from the boy and kind of patched up the argument. "I'll fix you," says the kid to Bill. "No man ever struck the Red Chief but what he got paid for it. You better beware!"

After breakfast the kid takes a piece of leather with strings wrapped around it out of his pocket and goes outside the cave unwinding it.

"What's he up to now?" says Bill anxiously. "You don't think he'll run away, do you, Sam?"

"No fear of it," says I. "He don't seem to be much of a home body. But we've got to fix up some plan about the ransom. There don't seem to be much excitement around Summit on account of his disappearance; but maybe they haven't realized yet that he's gone. His folks may think he's spending the night with Aunt Jane or one of the neighbors. Anyhow, he'll be missed today. Tonight we must get a message to his father demanding the two thousand dollars for his return."

Just then we heard a kind of war whoop, such as David might have emitted when he knocked out the champion Goliath. It was

a sling that Red Chief had pulled out of his pocket, and he was whirling it around his head.

I dodged and heard a heavy thud and a kind of a sigh from Bill, like a horse gives out when you take his saddle off. A niggerhead rock the size of an egg had caught Bill just behind his left ear. He loosened himself all over and fell in the fire across the frying pan of hot water for washing the dishes. I dragged him out and poured cold water on his head for half an hour.

By and by Bill sits up and feels behind his ear and says, "Sam, do you know who my favorite Biblical character is?"

"Take it easy," says I. "You'll come to your senses presently."

"King Herod,"³ says he. "You won't go away and leave me here alone, will you, Sam?"

I went out and caught that boy and shook him until his freckles rattled.

"If you don't behave," says I, "I'll take you straight home. Now, are you going to be good, or not?"

"I was only funning," says he sullenly. "I didn't mean to hurt Old Hank. But what did he hit me for? I'll behave, Snake-eye, if you won't send me home, and if you'll let me play the Black Scout today."

"I don't know the game," says I. "That's for you and Mr. Bill to decide. He's your playmate for the day. I'm going away for a while on business. Now, you come in and make friends with him and say you are sorry for hurting him, or home you go at once."

I made him and Bill shake hands, and then I took Bill aside and told him I was going to Poplar Cove, a little village three miles from the cave, and find out what I could about how the kidnapping had been regarded in Summit. Also, I thought it best to send a peremptory letter to old man Dorset that day, demanding the ransom and dictating how it should be paid.

"You know, Sam," says Bill, "I've stood by you without batting an eye in earthquakes, fire, and flood—in poker games, dynamite

³ **King Herod**: King of the Jews at the time of Christ's birth, who gave orders that all baby boys should be killed.

outrages, police raids, train robberies, and cyclones. I never lost my nerve yet till we kidnapped that two-legged skyrocket of a kid. He's got me going. You won't leave me long with him, will you, Sam?"

"I'll be back some time this afternoon," says I. "You must keep the boy amused and quiet till I return. And now we'll write the letter to old Dorset."

Bill and I got paper and pencil and worked on the letter while Red Chief, with a blanket wrapped around him, strutted up and down, guarding the mouth of the cave. Bill begged me tearfully to make the ransom fifteen hundred dollars instead of two thousand. "I ain't attempting," says he, "to decry the celebrated moral aspect of parental affection, but we're dealing with humans, and it ain't human for anybody to give up two thousand dollars for that forty-pound chunk of freckled wildcat. I'm willing to take a chance at fifteen hundred dollars. You can charge the difference up to me."

So, to relieve Bill, I acceded, and we collaborated a letter that ran this way:

Ebenezer Dorset, Esq.:

We have your boy concealed in a place far from Summit. It is useless for you or the most skillful detectives to attempt to find him. Absolutely, the only terms on which you can have him restored to you are these: We demand fifteen hundred dollars in large bills for his return; the money to be left at midnight tonight at the same spot and in the same box as your reply—as hereinafter described. If you agree to these terms, send your answer in writing by a solitary messenger tonight at half-past eight o'clock. After crossing Owl Creek on the road to Poplar Cove, there are three large trees about a hundred yards apart close to the fence of the wheat field on the right-hand side. At the bottom of the fencepost opposite the third tree will be found a small pasteboard box.

The messenger will place the answer in this box and return immediately to Summit.

If you attempt any treachery or fail to comply with our demand as stated, you will never see your boy again.

If you pay the money as demanded, he will be returned to you safe and well within three hours. These terms are final, and if you do not accede to them no further communication will be attempted.

TWO DESPERATE MEN

I addressed this letter to Dorset and put it in my pocket. As I was about to start, the kid comes up to me and says:

"Aw, Snake-eye, you said I could play the Black Scout while you was gone."

"Play it, of course," says I. "Mr. Bill will play with you. What kind of a game is it?"

"I'm the Black Scout," says Red Chief, "and I have to ride to the stockade to warn the settlers that the Indians are coming. I'm tired of playing Indian myself. I want to be the Black Scout."

"All right," says I. "It sounds harmless to me. I guess Mr. Bill will help you foil the pesky savages."

"What am I to do?" asks Bill, looking at the kid suspiciously.

"You are the hoss," says Black Scout. "Get down on your hands and knees. How can I ride to the stockade without a hoss?"

"You better keep him interested," said I, "till we get the scheme going. Loosen up."

Bill gets down on his all fours, and a look comes in his eye like a rabbit's when you catch it in a trap.

"How far is it to the stockade, kid?" he asks in a husky manner of voice.

"Ninety miles," says the Black Scout. "And you have to hump yourself to get there on time. Whoa, now!"

The Black Scout jumps on Bill's back and digs his heels in his side.

"For Heaven's sake," says Bill, "hurry back, Sam, as soon as you can. I wish we hadn't made the ransom more than a thousand. Say, you quit kicking me or I'll get up and warm you good."

I walked over to Poplar Cove and sat around the post-office and store, talking with the chawbacons⁴ that came in to trade. One whiskerando⁵ says that he hears Summit is all upset on account of

⁴ chawbacons: gossiping country bumpkins.

⁵ whiskerando: a heavily bearded native.

Elder Ebenezer Dorset's boy having been lost or stolen. That was all I wanted to know. I bought some smoking tobacco, referred casually to the price of black-eyed peas, posted my letter surreptitiously, and came away. The postmaster said the mail carrier would come by in an hour to take the mail on to Summit.

When I got back to the cave, Bill and the boy were not to be found. I explored the vicinity of the cave and risked a yodel or two, but there was no response.

So I lighted my pipe and sat down on a mossy bank to await developments.

In about half an hour I heard the bushes rustle, and Bill wobbled out into the little glade in front of the cave. Behind him was the kid, stepping softly like a scout, with a broad grin on his face. Bill stopped, took off his hat, and wiped his face with a red handkerchief. The kid stopped about eight feet behind him. .

"Sam," says Bill, "I suppose you'll think I'm a renegade, but I couldn't help it. I'm a grown person with masculine proclivities and habits of self-defence, but there is a time when all systems of egotism and predominance fail. The boy is gone. I have sent him home. All is off. There was martyrs in old times," goes on Bill, "that suffered death rather than give up the particular graft they enjoyed. None of 'em ever was subjugated to such supernatural tortures as I have been. I tried to be faithful to our articles of depredation; but there came a limit."

"What's the trouble, Bill?" I asks him.

"I was rode," says Bill, "the ninety miles to the stockade, not barring an inch. Then, when the settlers was rescued, I was given oats. Sand ain't a palatable substitute. And then, for an hour I had to try to explain to him why there was nothin' in holes, how a road can run both ways, and what makes the grass green. I tell you, Sam, a human can only stand so much. I takes him by the neck of his clothes and drags him down the mountain. On the way he kicks my legs black-and-blue from the knees down; and I've got to have two or three bites on my thumb and hand cauterized.

"But he's gone"—continues Bill—"gone home. I showed him the road to Summit and kicked him about eight feet nearer there

at one kick. I'm sorry we lose the ransom; but it was either that or Bill Driscoll to the madhouse."

Bill is puffing and blowing, but there is a look of ineffable peace and growing content on his rose-pink features.

"Bill," says I, "there isn't heart disease in your family, is there?"

"No," says Bill, "nothing chronic except malaria and accidents. Why?"

"Then you might turn around," says I, "and have a look behind you."

Bill turns and sees the boy, and loses his complexion and sits down plump on the ground and begins to pluck aimlessly at grass and little sticks. For an hour I was afraid for his mind. And then I told him that my scheme was to put the whole job through immediately, and that we would get the ransom and be off with it by midnight if old Dorset fell in with our proposition. So Bill braced up enough to give the kid a weak sort of a smile and a promise to play the Russian in a Japanese war with him as soon as he felt a little better.

I had a scheme for collecting that ransom, without danger of being caught by counterplots, that ought to commend itself to professional kidnappers. The tree under which the answer was to be left—and the money later on—was close to the road fence with big bare fields on all sides. If a gang of constables should be watching for anyone to come for the note, they could see him a long way off crossing the fields or in the road. But no, sirree! At half-past eight I was up in that tree as well hidden as a tree toad, waiting for the messenger to arrive.

Exactly on time a half-grown boy rides up the road on a bicycle, locates the pasteboard box at the foot of the fence post, slips a folded piece of paper into it, and pedals away again back toward Summit.

I waited an hour and then concluded the thing was square. I slid down the tree, got the note, slipped along the fence till I struck the woods, and was back at the cave in another half an hour. I opened the note, got near the lantern, and read it to Bill. It was written with a pen in a crabbed hand, and the sum and substance of it was this:

Two Desperate Men.

Gentlemen: I received your letter today by post, in regard to the ransom you ask for the return of my son. I think you are a little high in your demands, and I hereby make you a counter-proposition, which I am inclined to believe you will accept. You bring Johnny home and pay me two hundred and fifty dollars in cash, and I agree to take him off your hands. You had better come at night, for the neighbors believe he is lost, and I couldn't be responsible for what they would do to anybody they saw bringing him back.

Very respectfully,

EBENEZER DORSET

"Great pirates of Penzance!" says I. "Of all the impudent—"

But I glanced at Bill and hesitated. He had the most appealing look in his eyes I ever saw on the face of a dumb or a talking brute.

"Sam," says he, "what's two hundred and fifty dollars, after all? We've got the money. One more night of this kid will send me to a bed in Bedlam.⁶ Besides being a thorough gentleman, I think Mr. Dorset is a spendthrift for making us such a liberal offer. You ain't going to let the chance go, are you?"

"Tell you the truth, Bill," says I, "this little he ewe lamb has somewhat got on my nerves too. We'll take him home, pay the ransom, and make our get-away."

We took him home that night. We got him to go by telling him that his father had bought a silver-mounted rifle and a pair of moc-casins for him, and we were going to hunt bears the next day.

It was just twelve o'clock when we knocked at Ebenezer's front door. Just at the moment when I should have been abstracting the fifteen hundred dollars from the box under the tree, according to the original proposition, Bill was counting out two hundred and fifty dollars into Dorset's hand.

When the kid found out we were going to leave him at home, he started up a howl like a calliope and fastened himself as tight as a leech to Bill's leg. His father peeled him away gradually, like a porous plaster.

"How long can you hold him?" asks Bill.

⁶ Bedlam: a hospital for the insane (Bethlehem, in London).

"I'm not as strong as I used to be," says old Dorset, "but I think I can promise you ten minutes."

"Enough," says Bill. "In ten minutes I shall cross the Central, Southern, and Middle Western States, and be legging it trippingly for the Canadian border."

And, as dark as it was, and as fat as Bill was, and as good a runner as I am, he was a good mile and a half out of Summit before I could catch up with him.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. What single impression does the author achieve in this story? Name the various elements in the story that contribute to this central impression.

2. Would you call this a surprise-ending story? Give your reasons. How was the final episode prepared for?

3. What is meant by calling Ebenezer Dorset a "mortgage fancier" and a "forecloser"? What is the purpose of this one-sentence description of Mr. Dorset? What color of hair is indicated in the next sentence? What is "yellow journalism"?

4. O. Henry indicates a certain lack of education in Sam and Bill. They make grammatical errors ("Bill and me had . . ."). They use big words in such a way that they have almost no meaning ("undeleterious"). They are guilty of using wrong words ("mental *apparition*") and redundant expressions ("somniaolent sleepiness"). (Ask your teacher the meaning of "redundant.") Find other examples of each type of error. What do you think O. Henry gained by using these devices?

5. Use the dictionary for: lackadaisical, diatribe, welter-weight, incontinently, reconnoitre, bas-relief, peremptory, renegade, cauterized, ineffable, calliope.

FOR YOUR VOCABULARY

Blunders in the use of words (such as "mental *apparition*") are called "malapropisms," after Mrs. Malaprop, a character in a famous eighteenth-century comedy, *The Rivals*, by Richard B. Sheridan.

Some of Mrs. Malaprop's most famous "malapropisms" follow. See how many you can correct.

1. We would request you to forget the fellow—to *illiterate* him from your memory.

2. I would by no means wish a daughter of mine to be a *progeny* of learning. . . . She should have a *supercilious* knowledge of accounts. I would have her instructed in *geometry*, that she might have some knowledge of the *contagious* countries. . . . This is what I would have a woman know, and I don't think there is a *superstitious* article in it.

3. I hope you will represent Lydia to the captain as an object not altogether *illegible*.

4. He is the very *pineapple* of politeness.

5. She's as headstrong as an *allegory* on the banks of the Nile.

SOMETHING TO DO

1. Dramatize before the class one of the scenes from "The Ransom of Red Chief."

2. Consult the Dictionary of American Biography (or, if that is not available, any good encyclopedia), and report to the class the details of O. Henry's eventful life. Describe to the class the several environments with which he became familiar, and let them name a good story which grew out of each.

FOR FURTHER READING

Most high-school readers do not need to be urged to look up O. Henry's stories. He is considered the master of the nineteenth-century plot story with surprise ending. *The Complete Stories of O. Henry* is a volume well worth adding to your library. I can recommend particularly the following stories: "A Municipal Report," "A Retrieved Reformation," "The Caballero's Way," "The Cop and the Anthem," "The Duplicity of Hargraves," "The Furnished Room," "The Gift of the Magi," "The Last Leaf," "Mammon and the Archer."

THE CITIZNER

Louis Zara

Most of us have grown up in America, and we take our country and its blessings pretty much for granted. It is good for us to remember that one of the ideals which true Americans hold most dear is that our country shall receive and cherish in common brotherhood people from all lands and of all creeds. Louis Zara tells us with tender insight what citizenship means to one of those who have found refuge in our land.

MAMA KRAMER waited for the sun to come up: she had not been able to sleep at all. She was too excited to stay in bed. She put on her old quilted robe and watched for the dawn through the window. The night was so long a person could fall asleep waiting for it to end. But soon the stars were fading, the night was lifting, and the golden shadow of the sun was advancing from the east. She looked out gratefully. Such a lovely morning!

She could eat no breakfast; she had no appetite. She bustled about nervously and glanced every few minutes at the kitchen clock. This morning passed reluctantly. At last she dressed. She spent nearly two hours over her clothes, running from the clock to the mirror and from the mirror to the clock.

She was a gray-haired woman, short and plump, her hands roughened from housework, her body from childbearing. There were furrows in her cheeks, deep lines in her forehead, and suffering in the set of her jaw. She was often sad, even morose. But this morning she was transformed. Her dark eyes lit up; her mouth became broad with such love of life she felt young again. Today she would go again to the Court House and—if God were willing and the questions not too hard—she would become a citizen of the United States!

Her heart pounded. If the questions were not too hard! A flood of harsh interrogations swept her mind and chilled her. She flew to her purse. She took the booklet with the Constitution in English and in Yiddish. She fumbled for her spectacles and sat down at the window. In the morning light she went over the articles, the sections, and the clauses. It was all wonderful, even if the phrases did make her head swim.

A President must be thirty-five years old, not less. A President is four years elected, then if they like him he has another chance. A Senator is thirty, a Representative is only twenty-five. It bothered her that the Representatives should be such young fellows, but the Constitution said so, black on white.

Now the Supreme Court has nine men, and not a word about how old they should be. *A Senator has a job for six years, a Representative for two years, the President for four years, and the Supreme Court judges for life.* The difference puzzled Mama Kramer, but the Constitution said so. *On the Fourth of July was Independence. George Washington was the first President and today is F. D. R., Franklin D. Roosevelt. The capital city was New York, —no, Washington: the same as the first President. Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves.*

She rocked back and forth as she studied, her lips moving, her eyelids fluttering. What a shame it was that Ezra Kramer—may he rest in peace!—had not thought to take out “second papers” before they changed the law. Then she would have been a citizner without these endless sections and clauses and questions. But Ezra had been neglectful. The man—may he forgive us!—was always like that, good to a fault but neglectful. A man who never dunned a debtor, who gave his charities without adding his name and descent, who was more interested in his children’s education than in the size of his fortune—how should such a man remember? An easy-going man, who had been in America forty years or more, but had not got all his papers until his oldest son insisted on it, so that his father might vote in the Presidential election of 1928.

It was her own fault, too. After all, a woman who had lived in a land forty years, who had raised four children and had seen one go off to war in 1917 and never return, who had a grandson now in

an aviation school in New York, such a woman should know better herself. It was when she had to register as an alien that her heart ached so that she resolved to have "papers," too. Why should they fingerprint her and ask her so many questions and give her a passport and call her "alien"? She had children and grandchildren and nephews and nieces, all born in America, all citizners. And she loved America!

She had not consulted the children. Her only daughter lived in the city, but Hadassah had troubles enough of her own with little Edgar learning a whole concert to play at a recital in Kimball Hall. And the other children were scattered and had their own problems. Secretly Mama Kramer hoped to accomplish this all by herself. The children lived their lives and she lived hers.

What is the Bill of Rights? Why was it called a "bill"? Maybe it meant it was something the Government *owed* the citizner. *Freedom of the speech, of the press, of meetings, of praying to anybody you like, a trial by jury.* . . . She swayed as she studied and wondered whether her Ezra—may he rest in peace!—had known every jot and tittle. Were they making it harder for people to become citizners, or easier? Would she get a strict judge or an easy one? Would she be deported if she failed on the questions? She had answered them once safely. Would they be harder in this final examination?

Outside a horn tooted. She ran to the window. A long black limousine was waiting.

"Krakauer, don't go away!" she shouted and completed her preparations feverishly. "Hurry, hurry!" she panted. The witnesses were down there waiting. Witnesses should not be kept waiting. "Quickly, Goldie!"

For six months she had had ready two witnesses—Slemo Marcus, the butcher, and Abraham Loeb, the fishman. She had been buying her meats and fish from them for twenty-odd years. But the first summons to come to the Naturalization Court had appointed a Tuesday, and Tuesday is no small day at the fishmarket. So Abraham Loeb had had to excuse himself. Desperately Mama Kramer had looked about for another witness. Her oldest friends were all dead or removed to distant quarters. The younger people

worked during the day and could not leave their jobs. In that moment of trial she had happened to pass a group of mourners near Perez's Chapel and met her old *landsman*, Jake Krakauer. This was the Jacob Krakauer who had from a peddler of fruits and vegetables become very wealthy. He now owned the Krakauer Krown Food Stores and lived in a suburb. His house, they said, was the size of a small hotel.

Gray, weary-looking, he studied her. "Mama Kramer!"

"You still haven't forgotten your own people, Jacob! At least you come to their funerals."

Krakauer shrugged. "I am a plain man, Mama Kramer. If you could look inside my heart, you would see that I am still a democrat. The Angel of Death is also a democrat. He does not look at the income tax. When our time comes, he takes all."

She smiled. "Jacob," she asked, fixing her dark eyes on him, "when my time comes, would you do it for me, too? Would you come to my services?"

He blinked solemnly. "That I promise you, Mama."

"Ah, you'll help the dead but not the living!" she exulted.

A look of pain came into his face. "Who ever said that of Jacob Krakauer?"

"Then be for me a witness so that I can die a citizner."

"Be a citizner, Mama Kramer, and live to a hundred and twenty!" He wrenched out a smile. And this morning, here he was again, as he had promised faithfully, waiting for her in his big black limousine.

She bustled down the stairs and across the walk, a new flowered hat on her head, her purse under her arm, and an envelope of documents clutched to her heart. "A good morning, Krakauer!"

The chauffeur leaped out.

Krakauer offered his hand to help her in. "Good morning, Mama Kramer! All ready, *nu?*"

She sighed and settled into the upholstery. "All ready is right. So what are we waiting for, Jake?"

The car floated down to Twelfth Street and stopped at Slemo Marcus's butcher shop. Slemo, a little man with a tuft of a gray

beard and a hunted look in his brown eyes, came out wearing his black derby and his Sabbath coat.

After the greetings, he sat on one side of Mama Kramer, Jacob Krakauer on the other. He uttered hardly a word on the long ride to the Naturalization Court. Sitting in that limousine, he could find no words. But Mama Kramer talked; she was very fond of Slemo. He had taught her to write her own name in English.

When the first summons had come, she had marched into his meat market and slipped behind the counter.

"Slemo, show me how to write the name." She pushed the pencil and paper at him. "Write: 'Goldie Kramer!'"

"Goldie . . . Kramer," he wrote out laboriously. "Goldie! I don't like that Goldie."

"What's a matter with Goldie?"

Slemo tweaked his beard. "Now is a chance. Change into something fancy. Could be Gertrude or Gladys. Make it Gladys."

She frowned. "Make it nothing. Gladys Kramer!" Her shoulders jerked up. "I am not a Yankee. I am Goldie," she prodded him. "I was born Goldie, Goldie I lived, Goldie I'll die Write Goldie!"

He shrugged and wrote Goldie and let her toil over it. The pencil was nearly hidden in her large work-roughened hands. Her lips moved, her eyebrows twisted, her breath labored: she moved the pencil slowly and spelled the letters. She showed Slemo her first effort. He lifted his eyes to heaven. She wrote a third and a fourth, a fifth and a sixth. She covered one sheet and another. She paused only when her fingers cramped and her arm ached.

She applied herself again the next day and the next. Sympathetically, her fingers and eyes spelled it out—invisibly—when she washed dishes, when she made the bed, when she kneaded bread, when she scrubbed the floor, when she chopped meat or fish, and even when she lay down to sleep. "Goldie Kramer . . . Dzshee aw ell dee eye ee—" She wished she had a shorter name, but soon she had learned to write it. She was so pleased she wrote

it on the mailbox. She wrote out slips to put in the pockets of her dresses and in her coat. It was so wonderful to be able to write: "Goldie Kramer . . . Dzshee aw ell—"

As she rode in Krakauer's limousine, Mama Kramer spelled her name in the air. *How many men on the Supreme Court?* If it were only over!

In the old Court House the halls were broad and gray. People wound out of this room and into that, and weary policemen herded them along. "So many people!" thought Mama Kramer. When she went up in the elevator, she held on to her witnesses. The cage was packed; she might lose them. On the sixth floor they worked into a line toward a large painted sign which read "Naturalization Court." Krakauer went ahead and held Mama Kramer's hand; Slemo Marcus tagged behind.

"So many people!" muttered Mama Kramer to herself. "And all not citizners!" She looked at them closely.

There were other Jewish women like herself and many Jewish men, but there were also people who looked like "Yankees," English or Irish or perhaps Scottish, and Mexicans, Poles, Greeks, Italians, Armenians, Bohemians, Norwegians, and so many others that neither she nor Slemo Marcus could hazard what they were.

Jacob Krakauer smiled loftily. "What difference what they are today?" he asked. "Tomorrow they are United States citizners."

A child began to weep and Mama Kramer patted it. When she looked up at the mother, she thought the other must be German. For a moment she shuddered, but the woman's face was drawn and worried. Soon Mama Kramer was holding the child in her own arms.

The line moved on slowly. Mama Kramer reviewed the questions in her mind and grumbled, "If they made so much trouble for Columbus, he would never have come to America!"

Krakauer chortled. "Columbus had troubles, too, Mama. *Plenty!*"

At last they were in the courtroom. It was like a big school-room, and the teacher was the Judge, a white-haired smooth-shaven man in a black robe, who sat behind a high bench. When he rapped his gavel, people rose, others sat down. Hands shot

into the air. People mumbled words. Then he looked at his papers, rapped his gavel again. People tiptoed out. Some sat down; others got up.

"Goldie Kramer!"

Neither Mama Kramer nor Jacob Krakauer nor Slemo Marcus heard it the first time. The third call she shook herself. "Is it me, Krakauer?"

"You, you!"

Slemo trembled. "Go first, Mama!"

But she was frightened, too. "You go first, Krakauer."

"Ladies first!" he said.

All eyes were on her—she was sure of it—as she went down the aisle, her purse in one hand, her documents in the other. Her witnesses shuffled behind her.

"Goldie Kramer!" the Judge read from his papers.

"Here I am, Judge!" She stood before the high bench

He looked down at her while a clerk pushed more papers toward him. "You are Goldie Kramer?"

"Of course, Judge."

"Goldie Kramer, are you ready to be a citizen?"

She smiled. "What do you think, Your Honor? What did I come for but to—"

"Are you ready to be a citizen of the United States of America?" His voice was suddenly stern.

She became rigid. "Sure, sure, Judge!" Her hand jerked. "Of course, I want to be a citizen." Tears welled in her eyes.

"Do you understand what is meant by the Constitution?"

Fear blanched her face. *Constitution!* She wanted to talk but couldn't.

He looked at her keenly. "Constitution. Do you know what that means?"

Her eyes wandered from his face to the flag, to the clerk, to the bailiff. Where was Krakauer? Where was Slemo Marcus? She looked at the pictures of Washington and Lincoln on the wall behind the bench. "Ye-ye-yeah!" she stuttered.

She saw the clerk smiling and she remembered. "Oh, Constitution!" she cried. "Constitution! Judge, I'm surprised! Con-

stitution is the laws of the land. 'We, the People of the United States because we want to make a perfect government—' We have Congress, is Senators, two to a State, and Representatives, lots of them, and a President, a Supreme Court—" She giggled. "Oh, Judge, I been studying the Constitution. Ask me anything, Judge!"

He brushed at his mouth and chin. "So you know the Constitution, Goldie Kramer? Good. Now tell me what is the capital of the United States?"

Again she was horror-stricken. She heard Jacob Krakauer harumphing at her side. "Washington," she replied nervously. Her fingers knit together and her lips quivered to pronounce the name: "Washington."

"Who makes the laws? Do you know that?"

Her tongue was thick and her knees were trembling. "Congress makes the laws."

"What does the Supreme Court do?"

"You want," she began timidly, "I should say the truth?"

He nodded. His eyes crinkled.

"Then, Judge, if it's the truth—the Supreme Court they say if the law that Congress makes is any good."

The gavel rapped as an audible chuckling rattled about the bench. "Goldie Kramer, what do you know about the President?"

She beamed. "Oh, the President is thirty-five years old. At least. He has a job four years. Maybe more if the people want him. He works hard, Judge. Then he becomes an ex-President."

Gravely the Judge studied his papers. He spoke briefly to the witnesses. "That's all, Goldie Kramer."

She frowned. "That is all you are going to ask me, Judge?"

"That's all."

"But I learned so much, Judge!" She gestured excitedly. Krakauer and Marcus nudged her, but she ran on. "For three months now I studied and you don't ask me—"

The Judge pulled at his ear. "Very good, Goldie Kramer. One more question. Do you love this country?"

She smiled. "Oh, Judge, what a question! Do I love it? Who wouldn't love such a country? Forty years I been here.

My oldest boy he died in France. My grandson will fly an airplane soon for the Army." Her dark eyes flashed. "Judge, even if you gave me some other countries, gave them to me free—just like that—I wouldn't take them. But America, Judge—America is for me—and me, I'm for America!"

The courtroom applauded. The Judge smiled. Again he rapped his gavel. "It is a pleasure," he declared, "to say, 'Welcome, Goldie Kramer, to our free commonwealth of citizens!'"

She listened, bewildered, but he sounded nice. She wanted to say something, but Krakauer nudged her.

"Clerk, will you administer the oath?"

She looked straight at the Judge as she raised her right hand and listened to the oath of allegiance. "I do!" she responded clearly.

It was all over. Before she knew what had happened, she was in the hall and Krakauer and Marcus were shaking her hand.

A flood of tears poured from her eyes. Krakauer offered her his handkerchief; Marcus wrung his hands. Then she dried her eyes, blew her nose, and cleared her throat. The men gazed at her in astonishment.

"What for did you cry, Mama?" Krakauer asked.

"You are not a judge to ask questions," she said. "I wanted to cry, so I cried."

"But Mama Kramer, you should be happy!"

She gave him a look of scorn. "Slemo, who said I wasn't happy?"

Slemo shrugged his shoulders and pursed his lips.

They went down in the elevator and walked across the lobby.

She stood on the walk and looked up at the sky.

"A beautiful day!" she sighed happily and began to cry again.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. What was the author's chief purpose in writing this story? Let each pupil in the class write a sentence stating this purpose. Then have these sentences read in class. See if the class can reach an agreement on this matter.

2. What are the "second papers" that Ezra Kramer had failed to take out?

3. When Jacob Krakauer said he was still a democrat, did he mean he was a member of the Democratic Party?

4. Point out several details by which Mr. Zara shows that the Kramers, Jacob Krakauer, Slemo Marcus, and the Judge were kindly people.

5. What facts about your own country and its government did you learn from this story? Could you have answered the Judge's questions as well as Mama Kramer?

6. Use the dictionary for: morose, dunned, alien, naturalization.

FOR YOUR VOCABULARY

In a story about becoming a citizen you would expect to find words pertaining to our nation, its laws, and its ideals. Mama Kramer was listed as an *alien*. They went to the *Naturalization* Court. Krakauer said he was still a *democrat* in spite of his newly acquired wealth. The Judge welcomed Mama Kramer into the American *commonwealth*. Finally Mama Kramer took the oath of *allegiance*. Be sure you know what these terms mean.

SOMETHING TO DO

1. Write an editorial for your school paper in which you point out the inestimable value of American citizenship. Perhaps you would prefer to make a plea for tolerance toward some group, and to point out that members of this group are better citizens than those who look down upon them.

2. In this story the conversation is written in dialect. This gives verisimilitude to the story. But it is doubtful if any author records much conversation as it actually takes place. To test the question whether exact recording of conversation is ever desirable in a story, try recording some corridor conversation word for word, and see what the effect is.

ON THE STAIRS

Arthur Morrison

When the naturalists first began to write their "whole truth" stories, they believed that they must not make any judgments: they must not imply that this character is good, that action bad. But in practice, by their very selection of material they tended to violate this principle. Most of their work deals with cruelty, or injustice, or the miserable circumstances of unfortunate or underprivileged or oppressed people. If a man's heart is in the right place, he can't help hating these things. So the greatest naturalistic stories of today serve a good social purpose: their descriptions of deplorable conditions tend to imply that society is responsible for these conditions, that it ought not for one moment to tolerate them, and that men of good will should do something about them. Does not this moral effect justify the naturalists in portraying the unpleasant elements of human life?

"On the Stairs" takes us to the East End of London and introduces us to some of the underprivileged thousands who dragged out their lives in that unwholesome neighborhood. In this story we find a sympathetic picture of a sordid tragedy. The effect of such a story on us should be considerable. We, too, should be shocked and sorry for the victims; we, too, should be shocked and angry at conditions which produce such tragedy.

THE house had been "genteel." When trade was prospering in the East End, and the ship-fitter or block-maker thought it no shame to live in the parish where his workshop lay, such a master had lived here. Now, it was a tall, solid, well-bricked, ugly house, grimy and paintless in the joinery, cracked and patched in the windows: where the front door stood open all day long; and the womankind sat on the steps, talking of sickness and deaths and the

cost of things ; and treacherous holes lurked in the carpet of road-soil on the stairs and in the passage. For when eight families live in a house, nobody buys a door-mat, and the street was one of those streets that are always muddy. It smelt, too, of many things, none of them pleasant (one was fried fish) ; but for all that it was not a slum.

Three flights up, a gaunt woman with bare forearms stayed on her way to listen at a door which, opening, let out a warm, fetid waft from a close sick-room. A bent and tottering old woman stood on the threshold, holding the door behind her.

"An' is 'e no better now, Mrs. Curtis?" the gaunt woman asked, with a nod at the opening.

The old woman shook her head, and pulled the door closer. Her jaw waggled loosely in her withered chaps: "Nor won't be; till 'e's gone." Then after a certain pause, "'E's goin'," she said.

"Don't doctor give no 'ope?"

"'Lor' bless ye, I don't want to ast no doctors," Mrs. Curtis replied, with something not unlike a chuckle. "I've seed too many on 'em. The boy's a-goin', fast; I can see that. An' then"—she gave the handle another tug, and whispered—"he's been called." She nodded amain. "Three seprit knocks at the bed-head las' night; an' I know what *that* means!"

The gaunt woman raised her brows, and nodded. "Ah, well," she said, "we all on us comes to it some day, sooner or later. An' it's often a 'appy release."

The two looked into space beyond each other, the elder with a nod and a croak. Presently the other pursued, "'E's been a very good son, ain't 'e?"

"Ay, ay, well enough son to me," responded the old woman, a little peevishly; "an' I'll 'ave 'im put away decent, though there's on'y the Union¹ for me after. I can do that, thank Gawd!" she added, meditatively, as chin on fist she stared into the thickening dark over the stairs.

"When I lost my pore 'usband," said the gaunt woman, with a certain brightening, "I give 'im a 'ansome funeral. 'E was a Oddfeller, an' I got twelve pound I 'ad a oak caufin an' a open

¹ the Union: a workhouse, or home for poor old people.

'earse. There was a kerridge for the fam'ly an' one for 'is mates—two 'orses each, an' feathers, an' mutes; ² an' it went the furthest way round to the cimitry. 'Wotever 'appens, Mrs. Manders,' says the undertaker, 'you'll feel as you've treated 'im proper; nobody can't reproach you over that.' An' they couldn't. 'E was a good 'usband to me, an' I buried 'im respectable."

The gaunt woman exulted. The old, old story of Manders's funeral fell upon the other one's ears with a freshened interest, and she mumbled her gums ruminantly. "Bob'll 'ave a 'ansome buryin', too," she said. "I can make it up, with the insurance money, an' this, an' that. On'y I dunno about mutes. It's a expense."

In the East End, when a woman has not enough money to buy a thing much desired, she does not say so in plain words; she says the thing is an "expense," or a "great expense." It means the same thing, but it sounds better. Mrs. Curtis had reckoned her resources, and found that mutes would be an "expense." At a cheap funeral mutes cost half-a-sovereign and their liquor. Mrs. Manders said as much.

"Yus, yus, 'arf-a-sovereign," the old woman assented. Within, the sick man feebly beat the floor with a stick. "I'm a-comin'," she cried shrilly; "yus, 'arf-a-sovereign, but it's a lot, an' I don't see 'ow I'm to do it—not at present." She reached for the door-handle again, but stopped and added, by after-thought, "Unless I don't 'ave no ploods."

"It 'ud be a pity not to 'ave ploods. I 'ad—"

There were footsteps on the stairs: then a stumble and a testy word. Mrs. Curtis peered over into the gathering dark. "Is it the doctor, sir?" she asked. It was the doctor's assistant; and Mrs. Manders tramped up to the next landing as the door of the sick-room took him in.

For five minutes the stairs were darker than ever. Then the assistant, a very young man, came out again, followed by the old woman with a candle. Mrs. Manders listened in the upper dark. "He's sinking fast," said the assistant. "He *must* have a stimulant. Dr. Mansell ordered port wine. Where is it?" Mrs.

² mutes: hired mourners

Curtis mumbled dolorously. "I tell you he *must* have it," he averred with unprofessional emphasis (his qualification was only a month old). "The man can't take solid food, and his strength must be kept up somehow. Another day may make all the difference. Is it because you can't afford it?" "It's a expense—sich a expense, doctor," the old woman pleaded. "An' wot with 'arf-pints o' milk an'—" She grew inarticulate, and mumbled dismally.

"But he must have it, Mrs. Curtis, if it's your last shilling: it's the only way. If you mean you absolutely haven't the money—" and he paused a little awkwardly. He was not a wealthy young man—wealthy young men do not devil for East End doctors—but he was conscious of a certain haul of sixpences at nap³ the night before; and, being inexperienced, he did not foresee the career of persecution whereon he was entering at his own expense and of his own motion. He produced five shillings: "If you absolutely haven't the money, why—take this and get a bottle—good: not at a public-house. But mind, *at once*. He should have had it before."

It would have interested him, as a matter of coincidence, to know that his principal had been guilty of the selfsame indiscretion—even the amount was identical—on that landing the day before. But, as Mrs. Curtis said nothing of this, he floundered down the stair and out into the wetter mud, pondering whether or not the beloved son of a Congregational minister might take full credit for a deed of charity on the proceeds of sixpenny nap. But Mrs. Curtis puffed her wrinkles, and shook her head sagaciously as she carried in her candle. From the room came a clink as of money falling into a teapot. And Mrs. Manders went about her business.

The door was shut, and the stair a pit of blackness. Twice a lodger passed down, and up and down, and still it did not open. Men and women walked on the lower flights, and out at the door, and in again. From the street a shout or a snatch of laughter floated up the pit. On the pavement footsteps rang crisper and fewer, and from the bottom passage there were sounds of stagger and sprawl. A demented old clock buzzed divers hours at random,

³ nap: short for Napoleon, a game of cards

and was rebuked every twenty minutes by the regular tread of a policeman on his beat. Finally, somebody shut the street-door with a great bang, and the street was muffled. A key turned inside the door on the landing, but that was all. A feeble light shone for hours along the crack below, and then went out. The crazy old clock went buzzing on, but nothing left that room all night. Nothing that opened the door. . . .

When next the key turned, it was to Mrs. Manders's knock, in the full morning; and soon the two women came out on the landing together, Mrs. Curtis with a shapeless clump of bonnet. "Ah, 'e's a lovely corpse," said Mrs. Manders. "Like wax. So was my 'usband."

"I must be stirrin'," croaked the old woman, "an' go about the insurance an' the measurin' an' that. There's lots to do."

"Ah, there is. 'Oo are you goin' to 'ave,—Wilkins? I 'ad Wilkins. Better than Kedge, I think: Kedge's mutes dresses rusty, an' their trousis is frayed. If you was thinkin' of 'avin' mutes—"

"Yus, yus,"—with a palsied nodding,—"I'm a-goin' to 'ave mutes: I can do it respectable, thank Gawd!"

"And the ploom's?"

"Ay, yus, and the ploom's too. They ain't sich a great expense, after all."

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. In the opening paragraph point out the details which suggest that this building was a disagreeable place to live in. What awful truth occurs to you when you think over the author's comment: "But for all that it was not a slum"?

2. How did you feel about Mrs. Curtis' use of the money?

3. What is the subject of conversation between the two women? What things were required to make a funeral "respectable" in their eyes? Why did it seem absolutely necessary to Mrs. Curtis to bury her son "respectable"?

4. What are some similar social requirements which govern the lives of people you know? Which ones would you eliminate or modify? Why? Who might object?

5. State the central impression which you think the author in-

tended this story to convey. Try to find some details that do not contribute to this impression. If you cannot find any, what conclusion may you draw as to the artistic excellence of the story?

6. Use the dictionary for: joinery, fetid, waft, ruminantly, dolorously, demented, divers (adjective).

FOR YOUR VOCABULARY

The most interesting word in this story is the word *respectable*. It means "able to be respected" and hence sometimes is used to describe actions or qualities which produce this respect. But it is not a synonym for *good*. A *good* deed is one that comes out of your "good will"; whereas a *respectable* action merely meets the approval of those people from whom you desire respect. Other words that people use in place of *good* are: *estimable*, *reputable*, *worthy*, *meritorious*, *excellent*. Look them up in a dictionary and learn to distinguish between the various shades of meaning.

SOMETHING TO DO

"On the Stairs" starts with a realistic picture of the tenement in which the man was dying. The author carefully makes each detail contribute to the single effect of wretchedness. Write an opening paragraph for a story. Make it a clear, realistic picture of the setting. Stress one single impression, such as solid comfort, gloom, luxury, bareness, disrepair.

FOR FURTHER READING: STORIES OF THE SLUMS

Erskine Caldwell	.....	Rachel
Stephen Crane	... ..	A Dark Brown Dog
		An Experiment in Misery
Albert Halper	.....	Prelude
Albert Maltz	.....	Sunday Morning on Twentieth Street
Lao She	.....	The Glasses

THE AVENGING CHANCE

Anthony Berkeley

This story and its author are both held in high esteem by detective story writers. In London there is a club of such writers, the Detection Club, which was founded by Anthony Berkeley. And although there are only two short stories about Roger Sheringham, Ellery Queen includes the present one in his anthology, *101 Years' Entertainment*. So prepare yourself for an exciting mental chase.

ROGER SHERINGHAM was inclined to think afterwards that the Poisoned Chocolates Case, as the papers called it, was perhaps the most perfectly planned murder he had ever encountered. The motive was so obvious, when you knew where to look for it—but you didn't know; the method was so significant when you had grasped its real essentials—but you didn't grasp them; the traces were so thinly covered, when you had realised what was covering them—but you didn't realise. But for a piece of merest bad luck, which the murderer could not possibly have foreseen, the crime must have been added to the classical list of great mysteries.

This is the gist of the case, as Chief Inspector Moresby told it one evening to Roger in the latter's room in the Albany a week or so after it happened:—

ON the past Friday morning, the fifteenth of November, at half past ten o'clock, in accordance with his invariable custom, Sir William Anstruther walked into his club in Piccadilly,¹ the very exclusive Rainbow Club, and asked for his letters. The porter handed him three and a small parcel. Sir William walked over to the fireplace in the big lounge hall to open them.

¹ **Piccadilly:** A famous London street of fine houses, shops, and clubs. There is a circular section of this street called Piccadilly Circus.

A few minutes later another member entered the club, a Mr. Graham Beresford. There were a letter and a couple of circulars for him, and he also strolled over to the fireplace, nodding to Sir William, but not speaking to him. The two men only knew each other very slightly, and had probably never exchanged more than a dozen words in all.

Having glanced through his letters, Sir William opened the parcel and, after a moment, snorted with disgust. Beresford looked at him, and with a grunt Sir William thrust out a letter which had been enclosed in the parcel. Concealing a smile (Sir William's ways were a matter of some amusement to his fellow members), Beresford read the letter. It was from a big firm of chocolate manufacturers, Mason & Sons, and set forth that they were putting on the market a new brand of liqueur chocolates designed especially to appeal to men; would Sir William do them the honour of accepting the enclosed two-pound box and letting the firm have his candid opinion on them?

"Do they think I'm a blank chorus girl?" fumed Sir William. "Write 'em testimonials about their blank chocolates, indeed! Blank 'em! I'll complain to the blank committee. That sort of blank thing can't blank well be allowed here."

"Well, it's an ill wind so far as I'm concerned," Beresford soothed him. "It's reminded me of something. My wife and I had a box at the Imperial last night. I bet her a box of chocolates to a hundred cigarettes that she wouldn't spot the villain by the end of the second act. She won. I must remember to get them. Have you seen it—*The Creaking Skull*? Not a bad show."

Sir William had not seen it, and said so with force.

"Want a box of chocolates, did you say?" he added, more mildly. "Well, take this blank one. I don't want it."

For a moment Beresford demurred politely and then, most unfortunately for himself, accepted. The money so saved meant nothing to him for he was a wealthy man; but trouble was always worth saving.

By an extraordinarily lucky chance neither the outer wrapper of the box nor its covering letter were thrown into the fire, and this was the more fortunate in that both men had tossed the envelopes

of their letters into the flames. Sir William did, indeed, make a bundle of the wrapper, letter and string, but he handed it over to Beresford, and the latter simply dropped it inside the fender. This bundle the porter subsequently extracted and, being a man of orderly habits, put it tidily away in the waste-paper basket, whence it was retrieved later by the police.

Of the three unconscious protagonists in the impending tragedy, Sir William was without doubt the most remarkable. Still a year or two under fifty, he looked, with his flaming red face and thickset figure, a typical country squire of the old school, and both his manners and his language were in accordance with tradition. His habits, especially as regards women, were also in accordance with tradition—the tradition of the bold, bad baronet which he undoubtedly was.

In comparison with him, Beresford was rather an ordinary man, a tall, dark, not handsome fellow of two-and-thirty, quiet and reserved. His father had left him a rich man, but idleness did not appeal to him, and he had a finger in a good many business pies.

Money attracts money. Graham Beresford had inherited it, he made it, and, inevitably, he had married it, too. The daughter of a late shipowner in Liverpool, with not far off half a million in her own right. But the money was incidental, for he needed her and would have married her just as inevitably (said his friends) if she had not had a farthing. A tall, rather serious-minded, highly cultured girl, not so young that her character had not had time to form (she was twenty-five when Beresford married her, three years ago), she was the ideal wife for him. A bit of a Puritan perhaps in some ways, but Beresford, whose wild oats, though duly sown, had been a sparse crop, was ready enough to be a Puritan himself by that time if she was. To make no bones about it, the Beresfords succeeded in achieving that eighth wonder of the modern world, a happy marriage.

And into the middle of it there dropped with irretrievable tragedy, the box of chocolates.

Beresford gave them to her after lunch as they sat over their coffee, with some jesting remark about paying his honourable debts, and she opened the box at once. The top layer, she noticed,

seemed to consist only of kirsch and maraschino.² Beresford, who did not believe in spoiling good coffee, refused when she offered him the box, and his wife ate the first one alone. As she did so she exclaimed in surprise that the filling seemed exceedingly strong and positively burnt her mouth.

Beresford explained that they were samples of a new brand and then, made curious by what his wife had said, took one too. A burning taste, not intolerable but much too strong to be pleasant, followed the release of the liquid, and the almond flavouring seemed quite excessive.

"By Jove," he said, "they are strong. They must be filled with neat alcohol."

"Oh, they wouldn't do that, surely," said his wife, taking another. "But they are very strong. I think I rather like them, though."

Beresford ate another, and disliked it still more. "I don't," he said with decision. "They make my tongue feel quite numb. I shouldn't eat any more of them if I were you. I think there's something wrong with them."

"Well, they're only an experiment, I suppose," she said. "But they do burn. I'm not sure whether I like them or not."

A few minutes later Beresford went out to keep a business appointment in the City.³ He left her still trying to make up her mind whether she liked them, and still eating them to decide. Beresford remembered that scrap of conversation afterwards very vividly, because it was the last time he saw his wife alive.

That was roughly half past two. At a quarter to four Beresford arrived at his club from the City in a taxi, in a state of collapse. He was helped into the building by the driver and the porter, and both described him subsequently as pale to the point of ghastliness, with staring eyes and livid lips, and his skin damp and clammy. His mind seemed unaffected, however, and when they had got him

² *kirsch, maraschino*: liqueur flavorings, made from two different kinds of cherries

³ *the City*: the financial district of London, like Wall Street in New York, or La Salle Street in Chicago.

up the steps he was able to walk, with the porter's help, into the lounge.

The porter, thoroughly alarmed, wanted to send for a doctor at once, but Beresford, who was the last man in the world to make a fuss, refused to let him, saying that it must be indigestion and he would be all right in a few minutes. To Sir William Anstruther, however, who was in the lounge at the time, he added after the porter had gone:

"Yes, and I believe it was those infernal chocolates you gave me, now I come to think of it. I thought there was something funny about them at the time. I'd better go and find out if my wife—" He broke off abruptly. His body, which had been leaning back limply in his chair, suddenly heaved rigidly upright; his jaws locked together, the livid lips drawn back in a horrible grin, and his hands clenched on the arms of his chair. At the same time Sir William became aware of an unmistakable smell of bitter almonds.

Thoroughly alarmed, believing indeed that the man was dying under his eyes, Sir William raised a shout for the porter and a doctor. The other occupants of the lounge hurried up, and between them they got the convulsed body of the unconscious man into a more comfortable position. Before the doctor could arrive a telephone message was received at the club from an agitated butler asking if Mr. Beresford was there, and if so would he come home at once as Mrs. Beresford had been taken seriously ill. As a matter of fact she was already dead.

Beresford did not die. He had taken less of the poison than his wife, who after his departure must have eaten at least three more of the chocolates, so that its action was less rapid and the doctor had time to save him. As a matter of fact it turned out afterwards that he had not had a fatal dose. By about eight o'clock that night he was conscious; the next day he was practically convalescent.

As for the unfortunate Mrs. Beresford, the doctor had arrived too late to save her, and she passed away very rapidly in a deep coma.

The police had taken the matter in hand as soon as Mrs. Beres-

ford's death was reported to them and the fact of poison established, and it was only a very short time before things had become narrowed down to the chocolates as the active agent.

Sir William was interrogated, the letter and wrapper were recovered from the waste paper basket, and, even before the sick man was out of danger, a detective inspector was asking for an interview with the managing director of Mason & Sons. Scotland Yard moves quickly.

It was the police theory at this stage, based on what Sir William and the two doctors had been able to tell them, that by an act of criminal carelessness on the part of one of Mason's employees, an excessive amount of oil of bitter almonds had been included in the filling mixture of the chocolates, for that was what the doctor had decided must be the poisoning ingredient. However, the managing director quashed this idea at once: oil of bitter almonds, he asserted, was never used by Mason's.

He had more interesting news still. Having read with undisguised astonishment the covering letter, he at once declared that it was a forgery. No such letter, no such samples had been sent out by the firm at all: a new variety of liqueur chocolates had never even been mooted. The fatal chocolates were their ordinary brand.

Unwrapping and examining one more closely, he called the Inspector's attention to a mark on the underside, which he suggested was the remains of a small hole drilled in the case, through which the liquid could have been extracted and the fatal filling inserted, the hole afterwards being stopped up with softened chocolate, a perfectly simple operation.

He examined it under a magnifying glass and the Inspector agreed. It was now clear to him that somebody had been trying deliberately to murder Sir William Anstruther.

Scotland Yard doubled its activities. The chocolates were sent for analysis, Sir William was interviewed again, and so was the now conscious Beresford. From the latter the doctor insisted that the news of his wife's death must be kept till the next day, as in his weakened condition the shock might be fatal, so that nothing very helpful was obtained from him.

Nor could Sir William throw any light on the mystery or produce a single person who might have any grounds for trying to kill him. He was living apart from his wife, who was the principal beneficiary in his will, but she was in the South of France, as the French police subsequently confirmed. His estate in Worcestershire, heavily mortgaged, was entailed and went to a nephew; but as the rent he got for it barely covered the interest on the mortgage, and the nephew was considerably better off than Sir William himself, there was no motive there. The police were at a dead end.

The analysis brought one or two interesting facts to light. Not oil of bitter almonds but nitrobenzine, a kindred substance, chiefly used in the manufacture of aniline dyes, was the somewhat surprising poison employed. Each chocolate in the upper layer contained exactly six minims of it, in a mixture of kirsch and maraschino. The chocolates in the other layers were harmless.

As to the other clues, they seemed equally useless. The sheet of Mason's note paper was identified by Merton's, the printers, as of their work, but there was nothing to show how it had got into the murderer's possession. All that could be said was that, the edges being distinctly yellowed, it must be an old piece. The machine on which the letter had been typed, of course, could not be traced. From the wrapper, a piece of ordinary brown paper with Sir William's address hand-printed on it in large capitals, there was nothing to be learnt at all beyond that the parcel had been posted at the office in Southampton Street between the hours of 8.30 and 9.30 on the previous evening.

Only one thing was quite clear. Whoever had coveted Sir William's life had no intention of paying for it with his or her own.

"And now you know as much as we do, Mr. Sheringham," concluded Chief Inspector Moresby; "and if you can say who sent those chocolates to Sir William, you'll know a good deal more."

Roger nodded thoughtfully.

"It's a brute of a case. I met a man only yesterday who was at school with Beresford. He didn't know him very well because Beresford was on the modern side and my friend was a classical bird, but they were in the same house. He says Beresford's

absolutely knocked over by his wife's death. I wish you could find out who sent those chocolates, Moresby."

"So do I, Mr. Sheringham," said Moresby gloomily.

"It might have been anyone in the whole world," Roger mused. "What about feminine jealousy, for instance? Sir William's private life doesn't seem to be immaculate. I dare say there's a good deal of off with the old light-o'-love and on with the new."

"Why, that's just what I've been looking into, Mr. Sheringham, sir," retorted Chief Inspector Moresby reproachfully. "That was the first thing that came to me. Because if anything does stand out about this business it is that it's a woman's crime. Nobody but a woman would send poisoned chocolates to a man. Another man would send a poisoned sample of whisky, or something like that."

"That's a very sound point, Moresby," Roger meditated. "Very sound indeed. And Sir William couldn't help you?"

"Couldn't," said Moresby, not without a trace of resentment, "or wouldn't. I was inclined to believe at first that he might have his suspicions and was shielding some woman. But I don't think so now."

"Humph!" Roger did not seem quite so sure. "It's reminiscent, this case, isn't it? Didn't some lunatic once send poisoned chocolates to the Commissioner of Police himself? A good crime always get imitated, as you know."

Moresby brightened.

"It's funny you should say that, Mr. Sheringham, because that's the very conclusion I've come to. I've tested every other theory, and so far as I know there's not a soul with an interest in Sir William's death, whether from motives of gain, revenge, or what you like, whom I haven't had to rule quite out of it. In fact, I've pretty well made up my mind that the person who sent those chocolates was some irresponsible lunatic of a woman, a social or religious fanatic who's probably never even seen him. And if that's the case," Moresby sighed, "a fat chance I have of ever laying hands on her."

"Unless Chance steps in, as it so often does," said Roger brightly, "and helps you. A tremendous lot of cases get solved by a stroke

of sheer luck, don't they? *Chance the Avenger*. It would make an excellent film title. But there's a lot of truth in it. If I were superstitious, which I'm not, I should say it wasn't chance at all, but Providence avenging the victim."

"Well, Mr. Sheringham," said Moresby, who was not superstitious either, "to tell the truth, I don't mind what it is, so long as it lets me get my hands on the right person."

If Moresby had paid his visit to Roger Sheringham with any hope of tapping that gentleman's brains, he went away disappointed.

To tell the truth, Roger was inclined to agree with the Chief Inspector's conclusion, that the attempt on the life of Sir William Anstruther and the actual murder of the unfortunate Mrs. Beresford must be the work of some unknown criminal lunatic. For this reason, although he thought about it a good deal during the next few days, he made no attempt to take the case in hand. It was the sort of affair, necessitating endless inquiries that a private person would have neither the time nor the authority to carry out, which can be handled only by the official police. Roger's interest in it was purely academic.

It was hazard, a chance encounter nearly a week later, which translated this interest from the academic into the personal.

Roger was in Bond Street, about to go through the distressing ordeal of buying a new hat. Along the pavement he suddenly saw bearing down on him Mrs. Verreker-le-Flemming. Mrs. Verreker-le-Flemming was small, exquisite, rich, and a widow, and she sat at Roger's feet whenever he gave her the opportunity. But she talked. She talked, in fact, and talked, and talked. And Roger, who rather liked talking himself, could not bear it. He tried to dart across the road, but there was no opening in the traffic stream. He was cornered.

Mrs. Verreker-le-Flemming fastened on him gladly.

"Oh, Mr. Sheringham! *Just* the person I wanted to see Mr. Sheringham, *do* tell me. In confidence. *Are* you taking up this dreadful business of poor Joan Beresford's death?"

Roger, the frozen and imbecile grin of civilised intercourse on his face, tried to get a word in—without result.

"I was horrified when I heard of it—simply horrified. You see, Joan and I were such *very* close friends. Quite intimate. And the awful thing, the truly *terrible* thing is that Joan brought the whole business on herself. Isn't that *appalling*?"

Roger no longer wanted to escape.

"What did you say?" he managed to insert incredulously.

"I suppose it's what they call tragic irony," Mrs. Verreker-le-Flemming chattered on. "Certainly it was tragic enough, and I've never heard anything so terribly ironical. You know about that bet she made with her husband, of course, so that he had to get her a box of chocolates, and if he hadn't Sir William would never have given him the poisoned ones and he'd have eaten them and died himself and good riddance? Well, Mr. Sheringham—" Mrs. Verreker-le-Flemming lowered her voice to a conspirator's whisper and glanced about her in the approved manner. "I've never told anybody else this, but I'm telling you because I know you'll appreciate it. *Joan wasn't playing fair!*"

"How do you mean?" Roger asked, bewildered.

Mrs. Verreker-le-Flemming was artlessly pleased with her sensation.

"Why, she'd seen the play before. We went together, the very first week it was on. She *knew* who the villain was all the time."

"By Jove!" Roger was as impressed as Mrs. Verreker-le-Flemming could have wished. "Chance the Avenger! We're none of us immune from it."

"Poetic justice, you mean?" twittered Mrs. Verreker-le-Flemming, to whom these remarks had been somewhat obscure. "Yes, but Joan Beresford of all people! That's the extraordinary thing. I should never have thought Joan *would* do a thing like that. She was such a *nice* girl. A little close with money, of course, considering how well-off they are, but that isn't anything. Of course it was only fun, and pulling her husband's leg, but I always used to think Joan was such a *serious* girl, Mr. Sheringham. I mean, ordinary people don't talk about honour, and truth, and playing the game, and all those things one takes for granted. But Joan did. She was always saying that this wasn't honourable, or that wouldn't be playing the game. Well, she paid herself for not

playing the game, poor girl, didn't she? Still, it all goes to show the truth of the old saying, doesn't it?"

"What old saying?" said Roger, hypnotised by this flow.

"Why, that still waters run deep. Joan must have been deep, I'm afraid." Mrs. Verreker-le-Flemming sighed. It was evidently a social error to be deep. "I mean, she certainly took me in. She can't have been quite so honourable and truthful as she was always pretending, can she? And I can't help wondering whether a girl who'd deceive her husband in a little thing like that might not—oh, well, I don't want to say anything against poor Joan now she's dead, poor darling, but she can't have been *quite* such a plaster saint after all, can she? I mean," said Mrs. Verreker-le-Flemming, in hasty extenuation of these suggestions, "I do think psychology is so very interesting, don't you, Mr. Sheringham?"

"Sometimes, very," Roger agreed gravely. "But you mentioned Sir William Anstruther just now. Do you know him, too?"

"I used to," Mrs. Verreker-le-Flemming replied, without particular interest. "Horrible man! Always running after some woman or other. And when he's tired of her, just drops her—biff!—like that. At least," added Mrs. Verreker-le-Flemming somewhat hastily, "so I've heard."

"And what happens if she refuses to be dropped?"

"Oh dear, I'm sure I don't know. I suppose you've heard the latest."

Mrs. Verreker-le-Flemming hurried on, perhaps a trifle more pink than the delicate aids to nature on her cheeks would have warranted.

"He's taken up with that Bryce woman now. You know, the wife of the oil man, or petrol, or whatever he made his money in. It began about three weeks ago. You'd have thought that dreadful business of being responsible, in a way, for poor Joan Beresford's death would have sobered him up a little, wouldn't you? But not a bit of it; he—"

Roger was following another line of thought.

"What a pity you weren't at the Imperial with the Beresfords that evening. She'd never have made that bet if you had been."

Roger looked extremely innocent. "You weren't, I suppose."

"I?" queried Mrs. Verreker-le-Flemming in surprise. "Good gracious, no. I was at the new revue at the Pavilion Lady Gavelstoke had a box and asked me to join her party."

"Oh, yes. Good show, isn't it? I thought that sketch *The Sempiternal Triangle* very clever. Didn't you?"

"*The Sempiternal Triangle*?" wavered Mrs. Verreker-le-Flemming.

"Yes, in the first half."

"Oh! Then I didn't see it. I got there disgracefully late, I'm afraid. But then," said Mrs. Verreker-le-Flemming with pathos, "I always do seem to be late for simply everything."

Roger kept the rest of the conversation resolutely upon theatres. But before he left her he had ascertained that she had photographs of both Mrs. Beresford and Sir William Anstruther, and had obtained permission to borrow them some time. As soon as she was out of view he hailed a taxi and gave Mrs. Verreker-le-Flemming's address. He thought it better to take advantage of her permission at a time when he would not have to pay for it a second time over.

The parlourmaid seemed to think there was nothing odd in his mission, and took him up to the drawing-room at once. A corner of the room was devoted to the silver-framed photographs of Mrs. Verreker-le-Flemming's friends, and there were many of them. Roger examined them with interest, and finally took away with him not two photographs but six, those of Sir William, Mrs. Beresford, Beresford, two strange males who appeared to belong to the Sir William period, and, lastly, a likeness of Mrs. Verreker-le-Flemming herself. Roger liked confusing his trail.

For the rest of the day he was very busy.

His activities would have no doubt seemed to Mrs. Verreker-le-Flemming not merely baffling but pointless. He paid a visit to a public library, for instance, and consulted a work of reference, after which he took a taxi and drove to the offices of the Anglo-Eastern Perfumery Company, where he inquired for a certain Mr. Joseph Lea Hardwick and seemed much put out on hearing that no such gentleman was known to the firm and was certainly not

employed in any of their branches. Many questions had to be put about the firm and its branches before he consented to abandon the quest.

After that he drove to Messrs. Weall and Wilson, the well-known institution which protects the trade interests of individuals and advises its subscribers regarding investments. Here he entered his name as a subscriber, and explaining that he had a large sum of money to invest, filled in one of the special inquiry forms which are headed *Strictly Confidential*.

Then he went to the Rainbow Club, in Piccadilly.

Introducing himself to the porter without a blush as connected with Scotland Yard, he asked the man a number of questions, more or less trivial, concerning the tragedy.

"Sir William, I understand," he said finally, as if by the way, "did not dine here the evening before."

There it appeared that Roger was wrong. Sir William had dined in the club, as he did about three times a week.

"But I quite understood he wasn't here that evening," Roger said plaintively.

The porter was emphatic. He remembered quite well. So did a waiter, whom the porter summoned to corroborate him. Sir William had dined, rather late, and had not left the dining-room till about nine o'clock. He spent the evening there, too, the waiter knew, or at least some of it, for he himself had taken him a whisky and soda in the lounge not less than half an hour later.

Roger retired.

He retired to Merton's, in a taxi.

It seemed that he wanted some new note paper printed, of a very special kind, and to the young woman behind the counter he specified at great length and in wearisome detail exactly what he did want. The young woman handed him the books of specimen pieces and asked him to see if there was any style there which would suit him. Roger glanced through them, remarking garrulously to the young woman that he had been recommended to Merton's by a very dear friend, whose photograph he happened to have on him at that moment. Wasn't that a curious coincidence? The young woman agreed that it was.

"About a fortnight ago, I think, my friend was in here last," said Roger, producing the photograph. "Recognise this?"

The young woman took the photograph, without apparent interest.

"Oh, yes, I remember. About some note paper, too, wasn't it? So that's your friend. Well, it's a small world. Now this is a line we're selling a good deal of just now."

Roger went back to his rooms to dine. Afterwards, feeling restless, he wandered out of the Albany and turned up Piccadilly. He wandered round the Circus, thinking hard, and paused for a moment out of habit to inspect the photographs of the new revue hung outside the Pavilion. The next thing he realised was that he had got as far as Jermyn Street and was standing outside the Imperial Theatre. Glancing at the advertisements of *The Creaking Skull*, he saw that it began at half past eight. Glancing at his watch, he saw that the time was twenty-nine minutes past the hour. He had an evening to get through somehow. He went inside.

The next morning, very early for Roger, he called on Moresby at Scotland Yard.

"Moresby," he said without preamble, "I want you to do something for me. Can you find me a taximan who took a fare from Piccadilly Circus or its neighbourhood at about ten past nine on the evening before the Beresford crime to the Strand somewhere near the bottom of Southampton Street, and another who took a fare back between those points? I'm not sure about the first. Or one taxi might have been used for the double journey, but I doubt that. Anyhow, try to find out for me, will you?"

"What are you up to now, Mr. Sheringham?" Moresby asked suspiciously.

"Breaking down an interesting alibi," replied Roger serenely. "By the way, I know who sent those chocolates to Sir William. I'm just building up a nice structure of evidence for you. Ring up my rooms when you've got those taximen."

He strolled out, leaving Moresby positively gaping after him.

The rest of the day he spent apparently trying to buy a second-hand typewriter. He was very particular that it should be a Hamilton No. 4. When the shop people tried to induce him to

consider other makes he refused to look at them, saying that he had had the Hamilton No. 4 so strongly recommended to him by a friend who had bought one about three weeks ago. Perhaps it was at this very shop? No? They hadn't sold a Hamilton No. 4 for the last three months? How odd.

But at one shop they had sold a Hamilton No. 4 within the last month, and that was odder still.

At half past four Roger got back to his rooms to await the telephone message from Moresby. At half past five it came.

"There are fourteen taxidriviers here, littering up my office," said Moresby offensively. "What do you want me to do with 'em?"

"Keep them till I come, Chief Inspector," returned Roger with dignity.

The interview with the fourteen was brief enough, however. To each man in turn Roger showed a photograph, holding it so that Moresby could not see it, and asked if he could recognise his fare. The ninth man did so, without hesitation.

At a nod from Roger, Moresby dismissed them, then sat at his table and tried to look official. Roger seated himself on the table, looking most unofficial, and swung his legs. As he did so, a photograph fell unnoticed out of his pocket and fluttered, face downwards, under the table. Moresby eyed it but did not pick it up.

"And now, Mr. Sheringham, sir," he said, "perhaps you'll tell me what you've been doing?"

"Certainly, Moresby," said Roger blandly. "Your work for you. I really have solved the thing, you know. Here's your evidence." He took from his notecase an old letter and handed it to the Chief Inspector. "Was that typed on the same machine as the forged letter from Mason's, or was it not?"

Moresby studied it for a moment, then drew the forged letter from a drawer of his table and compared the two minutely.

"Mr. Sheringham," he said soberly, "where did you get hold of this?"

"In a secondhand typewriter shop in St. Martin's Lane. The machine was sold to an unknown customer about a month ago. They identified the customer from that same photograph. As it

happened, this machine had been used for a time in the office after it was repaired, to see that it was O.K., and I easily got hold of that specimen of its work."

"And where is the machine now?"

"Oh, at the bottom of the Thames, I expect," Roger smiled. "I tell you, this criminal takes no unnecessary chances. But that doesn't matter. There's your evidence."

"Humph! It's all right so far as it goes," conceded Moresby. "But what about Mason's paper?"

"That," said Roger calmly, "was extracted from Merton's book of sample note papers, as I'd guessed from the very yellowed edges might be the case. I can prove contact of the criminal with the book, and there is a gap which will certainly turn out to have been filled by that piece of paper."

"That's fine," Moresby said more heartily.

"As for the taximan, the criminal had an alibi. You've heard it broken down. Between ten past nine and twenty-five past, in fact during the time when the parcel must have been posted, the murderer took a hurried journey to that neighbourhood, going probably by bus or Underground, but returning, as I expected, by taxi, because time would be getting short."

"And the murderer, Mr. Sheringham?"

"The person whose photograph is in my pocket," Roger said unkindly. "By the way, do you remember what I was saying the other day about *Chance the Avenger*, my excellent film title? Well, it's worked again. By a chance meeting in Bond Street with a silly woman I was put, by the merest accident, in possession of a piece of information which showed me then and there who had sent those chocolates addressed to Sir William. There were other possibilities, of course, and I tested them, but then and there on the pavement I saw the whole thing, from first to last."

"Who was the murderer, then, Mr. Sheringham?" repeated Moresby.

"It was so beautifully planned," Roger went on dreamily. "We never grasped for one moment that we were making the fundamental mistake that the murderer all along intended us to make."

"And what was that?" asked Moresby.

"Why, that the plan had miscarried. That the wrong person had been killed. That was just the beauty of it. The plan had *not* miscarried. It had been brilliantly successful. The wrong person was *not* killed. Very much the right person was."

Moresby gasped.

"Why, how on earth do you make that out, sir?"

"Mrs. Beresford was the objective all the time. That's why the plot was so ingenious. Everything was anticipated. It was perfectly natural that Sir William should hand the chocolates over to Beresford. It was foreseen that we should look for the criminal among Sir William's associates and not the dead woman's. It was probably even foreseen that the crime would be considered the work of a woman!"

Moresby, unable to wait any longer, snatched up the photograph.

"Good heavens! But Mr. Sheringham, you don't mean to tell me that . . . Sir William himself!"

"He wanted to get rid of Mrs. Beresford," Roger continued. "He had liked her well enough at the beginning, no doubt, though it was her money he was after all the time.

"But the real trouble was that she was too close with her money. He wanted it, or some of it, pretty badly; and she wouldn't part. There's no doubt about the motive. I made a list of the firms he's interested in and got a report on them. They're all rocky, every one. He'd got through all his own money, and he had to get more.

"As for the nitrobenzine which puzzled us so much, that was simple enough. I looked it up and found that besides the uses you told me, it's used largely in perfumery. And he's got a perfumery business. The Anglo-Eastern Perfumery Company. That's how he'd know about it being poisonous, of course. But I shouldn't think he got his supply from there. He'd be cleverer than that. He probably made the stuff himself. Any schoolboy knows how to treat benzol with nitric acid to get nitrobenzine."

"But," stammered Moresby, "but Sir William . . . He was at Eton." ⁴

"Sir William?" said Roger sharply. "Who's talking about Sir

* **Eton**: a famous prep school in England. It was supposed to turn out gentlemen, with a high sense of honor and responsibility.

William? I told you the photograph of the murderer was in my pocket." He whipped out the photograph in question and confronted the astounded Chief Inspector with it. "Beresford, man! Beresford's the murderer of his own wife.

"Beresford, who still had hankerings after a gay life," he went on more mildly, "didn't want his wife but did want her money. He contrived this plot, providing as he thought against every contingency that could possibly arise. He established a mild alibi, if suspicion ever should arise, by taking his wife to the Imperial, and slipped out of the theatre at the first interval. (I sat through the first act of the dreadful thing myself last night to see when the interval came.) Then he hurried down to the Strand, posted his parcel, and took a taxi back. He had ten minutes, but nobody would notice if he got back to the box a minute late.

"And the rest simply followed. He knew Sir William came to the club every morning at ten thirty, as regularly as clockwork; he knew that for a psychological certainty he could get the chocolates handed over to him if he hinted for them; he knew that the police would go chasing after all sorts of false trails starting from Sir William. And as for the wrapper and the forged letter, he carefully didn't destroy them because they were calculated not only to divert suspicion but actually to point away from him to some anonymous lunatic."

"Well, it's very smart of you, Mr. Sheringham," Moresby said, with a little sigh, but quite ungrudgingly. "Very smart indeed. What was it the lady told you that showed you the whole thing in a flash?"

"Why, it wasn't so much what she actually told me as what I heard between her words, so to speak. What she told me was that Mrs. Beresford knew the answer to that bet; what I deduced was that, being the sort of person she was, it was quite incredible that she should have made a bet to which she knew the answer. *Ergo*, she didn't. *Ergo*, there never was such a bet. *Ergo*, Beresford was lying. *Ergo*, Beresford wanted to get hold of those chocolates for some reason other than he stated. After all, we only had Beresford's word for the bet, hadn't we?

"Of course he wouldn't have left her that afternoon till he'd seen

her take, or somehow made her take, at least six of the chocolates, more than a lethal dose. That's why the stuff was in those meticulous six-minim doses. And so that he could take a couple himself, of course. A clever stroke, that."

Moresby rose to his feet.

"Well, Mr. Sheringham, I'm much obliged to you, sir. And now I shall have to get busy myself." He scratched his head. "Chance the Avenger, eh? Well, I can tell you one pretty big thing Beresford left to Chance the Avenger, Mr. Sheringham. Suppose Sir William hadn't handed over the chocolates after all? Supposing he'd kept 'em, to give to one of his own ladies?"

Roger positively snorted. He felt a personal pride in Beresford by this time

"Really, Moresby! It wouldn't have had any serious results if Sir William had. Do give my man credit for being what he is. You don't imagine he sent the poisoned ones to Sir William, do you? Of course not! He'd send harmless ones, and exchange them for the others on his way home. Dash it all, he wouldn't go right out of his way to present opportunities to Chance.

"If," added Roger, "Chance really is the right word."

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. When Roger said, "I know who sent those chocolates to Sir William," did you know, too?

2. When Roger first caught sight of Mrs. Verreker-le-Flemming, he wanted to escape. But soon he was listening to her with the greatest intentness. What remark of hers caused his sudden interest?

3. Does the author withhold from you any evidence that Roger discovers? Has Roger picked the murderer before he comes into possession of this evidence?

4. "Roger liked confusing his trail." Did the author try to confuse you by any clues that serve no purpose except deception?

5. Explain the significance of the terms "tragic irony," "poetic justice," and "Chance the Avenger," as used here.

6. Explain the idioms "knocked over," "sat at Roger's feet," "pulling her husband's leg," "the firms . . . are all rocky," "took me in," and "tapping that gentleman's brains."

7. I have reprinted this story without attempting to Americanize

the author's British spelling. Make a list of words whose spelling differs from standard American practice. You should find at least ten.

8. Use the dictionary for: gist, liqueur, demurred, protagonists, farthing, entailed, nitrobenzine, aniline, irretrievable, neat (root meaning), livid, mooted, minims, immaculate, academic, hazard, extenuation, petrol, contingency, lethal, meticulous.

FOR YOUR VOCABULARY

The word *subsequently*, used several times in this story, has the Latin root, *sequ-* (*secut-*) meaning "follow." Other words with the same root are *sequel*, *sequence*, *consequences*, *inconsequential*, *persecute*, *prosecute*. For each of these words give a meaning which contains the word "follow." Be sure you understand the difference between *persecute* and *prosecute*.

SOMETHING TO DO

1. Build up in your classroom a library of detective fiction by having each member of the class contribute (as a loan) the best story of "pure detection" that he has ever read. This may be either a full-length novel or a short story. You may not know that Ellery Queen edits a magazine of such stories, called *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*. This would be an inexpensive source of material for your classroom library.

2. After the members of the class have read a number of detective stories, you might find it interesting to make a list of the various means used in the fictional murders, such as poisoned chocolates, falling stones, venomous reptiles, drowning, etc.

FOR FURTHER READING: DETECTIVE STORIES

E. C. Bentley	The Sweet Shot
Agatha Christie	The Affair of the Pink Pearl
	The Case of the Disappearing Lady
Carter Dickson	The Crime in Nobody's Room
Melville Davisson Post	The Doomdorf Mystery
	The Metal Box
Edgar Allan Poe .. .	The Purloined Letter
Ellery Queen	The One-Penny Black

I CAN'T BREATHE

Ring Lardner

Here is a gay piece of satire Ring Lardner does not approve of the heart-breaker in this story, but he finds her amusing rather than wicked. Therefore he lets her tell her story in her own "breathless" diary, and lets her expose her silliness and shallowness for all to see and laugh at, not to admire.

July 12

I AM staying here at the Inn for two weeks with my Uncle Nat and Aunt Jule and I think I will keep a kind of a diary while I am here to help pass the time and so I can have a record of things that happen though goodness knows there isn't lightly to anything happen, that is anything exciting with Uncle Nat and Aunt Jule making the plans as they are both at least 35 years old and maybe older.

Dad and mother are abroad to be gone a month and me coming here is supposed to be a recompence for them not taking me with them. A fine recompence to be left with old people that come to a place like this to rest. Still it would be a heavenly place under different conditions, for instance if Walter were here, too. It would be heavenly if he were here, the very thought of it makes my heart stop.

I can't stand it. I won't think about it.

This is our first seperation since we have been engaged, nearly 17 days. It will be 17 days tomorrow. And the hotel orchestra at dinner this evening played that old thing "Oh how I miss you tonight" and it seemed as if they must be playing it for my benefit though of course the person in that song is talking about how they miss their mother though of course I miss mother too, but a person gets used to missing their mother and it isn't like Walter or the person you are engaged to.

But there won't be any more separations much longer, we are going to be married in December even if mother does laugh when I talk to her about it because she says I am crazy to even think of getting married at 18.

She got married herself when she was 18, but of course that was "different," she wasn't crazy like I am, she knew whom she was marrying. As if Walter were a policeman or a foreigner or something. And she says she was only engaged once while I have been engaged at least five times a year since I was 14, of course it really isn't as bad as that and I have really only been really what I call engaged six times altogether, but is getting engaged my fault when they keep insisting and hammering at you and if you didn't say yes they would never go home.

But it is different with Walter. I honestly believe if he had not asked me I would have asked him. Of course I wouldn't have, but I would have died. And this is the first time I have ever been engaged to be really married. The other times when they talked about when should we get married I just laughed at them, but I hadn't been engaged to Walter ten minutes when he brought up the subject of marriage and I didn't laugh. I wouldn't be engaged to him unless it was to be married. I couldn't stand it.

Anyway mother may as well get used to the idea because it is "No Foolin'" this time and we have got our plans all made and I am going to be married at home and go out to California and Hollywood on our honeymoon. December, five months away. I can't stand it. I can't wait.

There were a couple of awfully nice looking boys sitting together alone in the dining-room tonight. One of them wasn't so much, but the other was cute. And he—

There's the dance orchestra playing "Always," what they played at the Biltmore the day I met Walter. "Not for just an hour not for just a day." I can't live. I can't breathe.

July 13

This has been a much more exciting day than I expected under the circumstances. In the first place I got two long night letters, one from Walter and one from Gordon Flint. I don't see how Walter ever had the nerve to send his, there was everything in it

and it must have been horribly embarrassing for him while the telegraph operator was reading it over and counting the words to say nothing of embarrassing for the operator.

But the one from Gordon was a kind of a shock. He just got back from a trip around the world, left last December to go on it and got back yesterday and called up our house and Helga gave him my address, and his telegram, well it was nearly as bad as Walter's. The trouble is that Gordon and I were engaged when he went away, or at least he thought so and he wrote to me right along all the time he was away and sent cables and things and for a while I answered his letters, but then I lost track of his itinery and couldn't write to him any more and when I got really engaged to Walter I couldn't let Gordon know because I had no idea where he was besides not wanting to spoil his trip.

And now he still thinks we are engaged and he is going to call me up tomorrow from Chicago and how in the world can I explain things and get him to understand because he is really serious and I like him ever and ever so much and in lots of ways he is nicer than Walter, not really nicer but better looking and there is no comparison between their dancing. Walter simply can't learn to dance, that is really dance. He says it is because he is flat footed, he says that as a joke, but it is true and I wish to heavens it wasn't.

All forenoon I thought and thought and thought about what to say to Gordon when he calls up and finally I couldn't stand thinking about it any more and just made up my mind I wouldn't think about it any more. But I will tell the truth though it will kill me to hurt him.

I went down to lunch with Uncle Nat and Aunt Jule and they were going out to play golf this afternoon and were insisting that I go with them, but I told them I had a headache and then I had a terrible time getting them to go without me. I didn't have a headache at all and just wanted to be alone to think about Walter and besides when you play with Uncle Nat he is always correcting your stance or your swing or something and always puts his hands on my arms or shoulders to show me the right way and I can't stand it to have old men touch me, even if they are your uncle.

I finally got rid of them and I was sitting watching the tennis

when that boy that I saw last night, the cute one, came and sat right next to me and of course I didn't look at him and I was going to smoke a cigarette and found I had left my lighter upstairs and I started to get up and go after it when all of a sudden he was offering me his lighter and I couldn't very well refuse it without being rude. So we got to talking and he is even cuter than he looks, the most original and wittiest person I believe I ever met and I haven't laughed so much in I don't know how long.

For one thing he asked me if I had heard Rockefeller's song and I said no and he began singing "Oil alone." Then he asked me if I knew the orange juice song and I told him no again and he said it was "Orange juice sorry you made me cry." I was in hysterics before we had been together ten minutes.

His name is Frank Caswell and he has been out of Dartmouth a year and is 24 years old. That isn't so terribly old, only two years older than Walter and three years older than Gordon. I hate the name Frank, but Caswell is all right and he is so cute.

He was out in California last winter and visited Hollywood and met everybody in the world and it is fascinating to listen to him. He met Norma Shearer and he said he thought she was the prettiest thing he had ever seen. What he said was "I did think she was the prettiest girl in the world, till today." I was going to pretend I didn't get it, but I finally told him to be sensible or I would never be able to believe anything he said.

Well, he wanted me to dance with him tonight after dinner and the next question was how to explain how we had met each other to Uncle Nat and Aunt Jule. Frank said he would fix that all right and sure enough he got himself introduced to Uncle Nat when Uncle Nat came in from golf and after dinner Uncle Nat introduced him to me and Aunt Jule too and we danced together all evening, that is not Aunt Jule. They went to bed, thank heavens.

He is a heavenly dancer, as good as Gordon. One dance we were dancing and for one of the encores the orchestra played "In a cottage small by a waterfall" and I simply couldn't dance to it. I just stopped still and said "Listen, I can't bear it, I can't breathe" and poor Frank thought I was sick or something and I had to ex-

plain that that was the tune the orchestra played the night I sat at the next table to Jack Barrymore at Barney Gallant's.

I made him sit out that encore and wouldn't let him talk till they got through playing it. Then they played something else and I was all right again and Frank told me about meeting Jack Barrymore. Imagine meeting him. I couldn't live.

I promised Aunt Jule I would go to bed at eleven and it is way past that now, but I am all ready for bed and have just been writing this. Tomorrow Gordon is going to call up and what will I say to him? I just won't think about it.

July 14

Gordon called up this morning from Chicago and it was wonderful to hear his voice again though the connection was terrible. He asked me if I still loved him and I tried to tell him no, but I knew that would mean an explanation and the connection was so bad that I never could make him understand so I said yes, but I almost whispered it purposely, thinking he wouldn't hear me, but he heard me all right and he said that made everything all right with the world. He said he thought I had stopped loving him because I had stopped writing.

I wish the connection had been decent and I could have told him how things were, but now it is terrible because he is planning to get to New York the day I get there and heaven knows what I will do because Walter will be there, too. I just won't think about it.

Aunt Jule came in my room just after I was through talking to Gordon, thank heavens. The room was full of flowers. Walter had sent me some and so had Frank. I got another long night letter from Walter, just as silly as the first one. I wish he would say those things in letters instead of night letters so everybody in the world wouldn't see them. Aunt Jule wanted me to read it aloud to her. I would have died.

While she was still in the room, Frank called up and asked me to play golf with him and I said all right and Aunt Jule said she was glad my headache was gone. She was trying to be funny.

I played golf with Frank this afternoon. He is a beautiful golfer and it is thrilling to watch him drive, his swing is so much

more graceful than Walter's. I asked him to watch me swing and tell me what was the matter with me, but he said he couldn't look at anything but my face and there wasn't anything the matter with that.

He told me the boy who was here with him had been called home and he was glad of it because I might have liked him, the other boy, better than himself. I told him that couldn't be possible and he asked me if I really meant that and I said of course, but I smiled when I said it so he wouldn't take it too seriously.

We danced again tonight and Uncle Nat and Aunt Jule sat with us a while and danced a couple of dances themselves, but they were really there to get better acquainted with Frank and see if he was all right for me to be with. I know they certainly couldn't have enjoyed their own dancing, no old people really can enjoy it because they can't really *do* anything.

They were favorably impressed with Frank I think, at least Aunt Jule didn't say I must be in bed at eleven, but just not to stay up too late. I guess it is a big surprise to a girl's parents and aunts and uncles to find out that the boys you go around with are all right, they always seem to think that if I seem to like somebody and the person pays a little attention to me, why he must be a convict or a policeman or a drunkard or something queer.

Frank had some more songs for me tonight. He asked me if I knew the asthma song and I said I didn't and he said "Oh, you must know that. It goes yes, sir, asthma baby." Then he told me about the underwear song, "I underwear my baby is tonight." He keeps you in hysterics and yet he has his serious side, in fact he was awfully serious when he said good night to me and his eyes simply shown. I wish Walter were more like him in some ways, but I mustn't think about that.

July 15

I simply can't live and I know I'll never sleep tonight. I am in a terrible predicament or rather I won't know whether I really am or not till tomorrow and that is what makes it so terrible.

After we had danced two or three dances, Frank asked me to go for a ride with him and we went for a ride in his car and he had had some cocktails and during the ride he had some drinks out of a

flask and finally he told me he loved me and I said not to be silly, but he said he was perfectly serious and he certainly acted that way. He asked me if I loved anybody else and I said yes and he asked if I didn't love him more than anybody else and I said yes, but only because I thought he had probably had too much to drink and wouldn't remember it anyway and the best thing to do was humor him under the circumstances.

Then all of a sudden he asked me when I could marry him and I said, just as a joke, that I couldn't possibly marry him before December. He said that was a long time to wait, but I was certainly worth waiting for and he said a lot of other things and maybe I humored him a little too much, but that is just the trouble, I don't know.

I was absolutely sure he was tight and would forget the whole thing, but that was early in the evening, and when we said good night he was a whole lot more sober than he had been and now I am not sure how it stands. If he doesn't remember anything about it, of course I am all right. But if he does remember and if he took me seriously, I will simply have to tell him about Walter and maybe about Gordon, too. And it isn't going to be easy. The suspense is what is maddening and I know I'll never live through this night.

July 16

I can't stand it, I can't breathe, life is impossible. Frank remembered everything about last night and firmly believes we are engaged and going to be married in December. His people live in New York and he says he is going back when I do and have them meet me.

Of course it can't go on and tomorrow I will tell him about Walter or Gordon or both of them. I know it is going to hurt him terribly, perhaps spoil his life and I would give anything in the world not to have had it happen. I hate so to hurt him because he is so nice besides being so cute and attractive.

He sent me the loveliest flowers this morning and called up at ten and wanted to know how soon he could see me and I hope the girl wasn't listening in because the things he said were, well, like Walter's night letters.

And that is another terrible thing, today I didn't get a night letter from Walter, but there was a regular letter instead and I carried it around in my purse all this afternoon and evening and never remembered to read it till ten minutes ago when I came up in the room. Walter is worried because I have only sent him two telegrams and written him one letter since I have been here, he would be a lot more worried if he knew what has happened now, though of course it can't make any difference because he is the one I am really engaged to be married to and the one I told mother I was going to marry in December and I wouldn't dare tell her it was somebody else.

I met Frank for lunch and we went for a ride this afternoon and he was so much in love and so lovely to me that I simply did not have the heart to tell him the truth, I am surely going to tell him tomorrow and telling him today would have just meant one more day of unhappiness for both of us.

He said his people had plenty of money and his father had offered to take him into partnership and he might accept, but he thinks his true vocation is journalism with a view to eventually writing novels and if I was willing to undergo a few hardships just at first we would probably both be happier later on if he was doing something he really liked. I didn't know what to say, but finally I said I wanted him to suit himself and money wasn't everything.

He asked me where I would like to go on my honeymoon and I suppose I ought to have told him my honeymoon was all planned, that I was going to California, with Walter, but all I said was that I had always wanted to go to California and he was enthusiastic and said that is where we would surely go and he would take me to Hollywood and introduce me to all those wonderful people he met there last winter. It nearly takes my breath away to think of it, going there with someone who really knows people and has the entrée.

We danced again tonight, just two or three dances, and then went out and sat in the tennis-court, but I came upstairs early because Aunt Jule had acted kind of funny at dinner. And I wanted to be alone, too, and think, but the more I think the worse it gets.

Sometimes I wish I were dead, maybe that is the only solution

and it would be best for everyone concerned. I *will* die if things keep on the way they have been. But of course tomorrow it will be all over, with Frank I mean, for I must tell him the truth no matter how much it hurts us both. Though I don't care how much it hurts me. The thought of hurting him is what is driving me mad. I can't bear it.

July 18

I have skipped a day. I was busy every minute of yesterday and so exhausted when I came upstairs that I was tempted to fall into bed with all my clothes on. First Gordon called me up from Chicago to remind me that he would be in New York the day I got there and that when he comes he wants me all to himself all the time and we can make plans for our wedding. The connection was bad again and I just couldn't explain to him about Walter.

I had an engagement with Frank for lunch and just as we were going in another long distance call came, from Walter this time. He wanted to know why I haven't written more letters and sent him more telegrams and asked me if I still loved him and of course I told him yes because I really do. Then he asked if I had met any men here and I told him I had met one, a friend of Uncle Nat's. After all it was Uncle Nat who introduced me to Frank. He reminded me that he would be in New York on the 25th which is the day I expect to get home, and said he would have theater tickets for that night and we would go somewhere afterwards and dance.

Frank insisted on knowing who had kept me talking so long and I told him it was a boy I had known a long while, a very dear friend of mine and a friend of my family's. Frank was jealous and kept asking questions till I thought I would go mad. He was so serious and kind of cross and gruff that I gave up the plan of telling him the truth till some time when he is in better spirits.

I played golf with Frank in the afternoon and we took a ride last night and I wanted to get in early because I had promised both Walter and Gordon that I would write them long letters, but Frank wouldn't bring me back to the Inn till I had named a definite date in December. I finally told him the 10th and he said all right if I was sure that wasn't a Sunday. I said I would have to look it up, but as a matter of fact I know the 10th falls on a Friday because

the date Walter and I have agreed on for our wedding is Saturday the 11th.

Today has just been the same thing over again, two more night letters, a long distance call from Chicago, golf and a ride with Frank, and the room full of flowers. But tomorrow I am going to tell Frank and I am going to write Gordon a long letter and tell him, too, because this simply can't go on any longer. I can't breathe. I can't live.

July 21

I wrote to Gordon yesterday, but I didn't say anything about Walter because I don't think it is a thing a person ought to do by letter. I can tell him when he gets to New York and then I will be sure that he doesn't take it too hard and I can promise him that I will be friends with him always and make him promise not to do anything silly, while if I told it to him in a letter there is no telling what he would do, there all alone.

And I haven't told Frank because he hasn't been feeling well, he is terribly sunburned and it hurts him terribly so he can hardly play golf or dance, and I want him to be feeling his best when I do tell him, but whether he is all right or not I simply must tell him tomorrow because he is actually planning to leave here on the same train with us Saturday night and I can't let him do that.

Life is so hopeless and it could be so wonderful For instance how heavenly it would be if I could marry Frank first and stay married to him five years and he would be the one who would take me to Hollywood and maybe we could go on parties with Norman Kerry and Jack Barrymore and Buster Collier and Marion Davies and Lois Moran.

And at the end of five years Frank could go into journalism and write novels and I would only be 23 and I could marry Gordon and he would be ready for another trip around the world and he could show me things better than someone who had never seen them before.

Gordon and I would separate at the end of five years and I would be 28 and I know of lots of women that never even got married the first time till they were 28 though I don't suppose that was their fault, but I would marry Walter then, for after all he is the one I

really love and want to spend most of my life with and I wouldn't care whether he could dance or not when I was that old. Before long we would be as old as Uncle Nat and Aunt Jule and I certainly wouldn't want to dance at their age when all you can do is just hobble around the floor. But Walter is so wonderful as a companion and we would enjoy the same things and be pals and maybe we would begin to have children.

But that is all impossible though it wouldn't be if older people just had sense and would look at things the right way.

It is only half past ten, the earliest I have gone to bed in weeks, but I am worn out and Frank went to bed early so he could put cold cream on his sunburn.

Listen, diary, the orchestra is playing "Limehouse Blues." The first tune I danced to with Merle Oliver, two years ago. I can't stand it. And how funny that they should play that old tune tonight of all nights, when I have been thinking of Merle off and on all day, and I hadn't thought of him before in weeks and weeks. I wonder where he is, I wonder if it is just an accident or if it means I am going to see him again. I simply mustn't think about it or I'll die.

July 22

I knew it wasn't an accident. I knew it must mean something, and it did.

Merle is coming here today, here to this Inn, and just to see me. And there can only be one reason. And only one answer. I knew that when I heard his voice calling from Boston. How could I ever have thought I loved anyone else? How could he ever have thought I meant it when I told him I was engaged to George Morse?

A whole year and he still cares and I still care. That shows we were always intended for each other and for no one else. I won't make *him* wait till December. I doubt if we even wait till dad and mother get home. And as for a honeymoon I will go with him to Long Beach or the Bronx Zoo, wherever he wants to take me.

After all this is the best way out of it, the only way. I won't have to say anything to Frank, he will guess when he sees me with Merle. And when I get home Sunday and Walter and Gordon call me up, I will invite them both to dinner and Merle can tell them

himself, with two of them there it will only hurt each one half as much as if they were alone.

The train is due at 2:40, almost three hours from now. I can't wait. And what if it should be late? I can't stand it.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. The little lady was guilty of rationalizing, which means she could always find an excuse for doing what she should not have done and for leaving undone what she should have done. Pick out several instances of this rationalizing, such as, "But is getting engaged my fault when they keep insisting and hammering at you and if you didn't say yes they would never go home?"

2. Half the fun in this story is the breathless way the heroine writes her diary. Point out several places where her sentences run on and on without punctuation. Why does Mr. Lardner have her write this way?

3. Did you find the girl's conduct wicked, or just silly? What was your feeling about the boys in the story?

FOR YOUR VOCABULARY

The writer of this diary used *lightly* for *likely*, and *shown* for *shone*. She also misspelled *recompense*, *separation*, and *itinerary*. She misspelled "itinerary" because she did not know how to pronounce it. Other words often misspelled because mispronounced include: *accidentally*, *arctic*, *athletics* (not *atheletics*), *laboratory*, *mischievous* (not *mischievius*), *sophomore*. What others can you name?

SOMETHING TO DO

Try your hand at a brief bit of satire. This may take the form of a paragraph of description, or a short conversation. Or, you may write an entry from a silly diary, like the entries in "I Can't Breathe." Remember you are trying to make something or somebody seem ridiculous, and not admirable, to the reader.

FOR FURTHER READING

The stories of Ring Lardner were collected in a volume called *Round Up*. More recently the Modern Library has issued a volume of *The Collected Short Stories of Ring Lardner*. Some of the best of the stories are these: "Alibi Ike," "Champion," "The Golden Honeymoon," "Haircut," "Hurry Kane," "There Are Smiles"

THE FOUR-MINUTE MILE

Alec Rackowe

The dean's daughter, quoting the first theorem from Euclid, states the theme of the following story in these simple terms: "The sum of the whole is greater than any of its parts." But to the author, and eventually to Steve Miller, this is a significant truth, not merely of geometry, but about the conduct of life.

STEVE MILLER WAS aware of the little knot of people on the flagstones fronting the low grandstand. The bright sun whitened the empty, weather-stained benches, emphasized the green turf enclosed by the hard-packed cinders of the track.

Striding easily, he clicked off the three quarters without effort, bending into the turns of the furlong track with an ease and knowledge born of experience. He ran as he had always run, ever since as a boy he had raced from the pasture to the house on those nippy mornings—those cool, dewy mornings when breakfast was waiting for him with chores to be done afterward and himself the only one old enough to give his harassed father a hand.

Coming into the stretch, the group danced nearer and he was conscious of the flash of color that was Kay Folling's yellow skirt. Dean Folling was there, sweat-shirted, pipe in mouth; Paul Maye, the track captain, and the notable visitor from the Associated Press. But Steve saw only Kay as he neared the post that marked the start and finish line. He didn't look at her. He didn't need to. He knew the shortness of her upper lip, the swirl of her honey-colored hair and the way her blue eyes looked at him—coolly, almost indifferently.

There was little he cared about at Midwestern, but the way Kay Folling looked at him was one of the things he would have changed,

except that he knew it couldn't be different. It was dumb to be in love with a girl who didn't know you existed. But, since there was nothing you could do about feeling like that, you went on with the things you'd planned years ago and made the best of it. And that was by keeping out of her way—seeing as little of her as possible.

The stop watch was clamped to the palm of his left hand by a broad rubber band. As the pole flashed by he pressed with his finger. His stride lengthened, spikes biting into the thin cinders and into the harder spots where the cinders were gone and the clay sent hard shudders up the calves of his slim legs.

He leaned into it, keeping his form, striding. The turns floated to him as he eased the drive slightly until the stretch loomed again, straightening, and the blob of color that was Kay fled past. At the far turn he gave it everything, pouring it on, trying not to tighten. The turn fled and the finish came at him. His fingers slid from the damp glass of the stop watch to the plunger

He was almost at the far turn before he slowed and jogged back to where his long woolen pants and hooded zipper shirt lay on the grass. He glanced at the face of the watch as he picked up his pants. The perspiration glistened on his forehead but his expression did not change. He was slim, black-haired, gray-eyed. He threw the towel about his neck, zippered the shirt and, carrying his spiked shoes, walked in his wool-socked feet toward the grandstand.

Dean Folling beamed at him. Paul Maye walked out onto the track and Red Carr, Don Fletcher and Frank Dolan, lying beside the jump pit, got to their feet. Steve heard Paul say, "Okay. Baton passing . . . and don't pull any ligaments."

Steve was aware of Kay's eyes on him. Dean Folling said, "This is Mr. Boorum, Miller. He tells me they're worrying about what you'll do to them at Cambridge."

The big man in the battered fedora grinned. "That was a nice last quarter. Fifty-seven about?"

"About," Steve said.

Boorum shifted his cigar. "Do you think you can take the mile at the Intercollegiates?"

"I'll take it," Steve said. His lips firmed as he felt Kay's eyes on his face.

"You wouldn't care to guess at your time? It would make my story better."

Steve looked down at the flagstones, then glanced up. His voice was even "I'll do four."

He looked at Kay even as he heard Boorum's gasp. But her blue eyes met his with an expression he could not identify. Boorum said, "You're not serious, are you?"

Steve turned his head. "Don't you think it can be done?"

"Some day," Boorum said. "Some day someone is going to run the four-minute mile—but—well, it'll just happen."

"It will be planned," Steve said. "If that track at Harvard isn't too slow I'll do four minutes next week."

Boorum took his cigar from his mouth. "Sixty-second quarters?"

"No. I've read that's how they dope it in the East—but I've set it differently."

"How?" Boorum asked. "Would you care to name your fractionals?"

"I don't mind," Steve said. "Sixty, sixty-two, sixty-three and a final quarter in fifty-five seconds."

Boorum swallowed, blinking. "You're going 'way out on a limb, feller. I'm going to write this and file it. You'll be on a spot when you hit Boston."

"That's all right," Steve said. "I'll do four—or so close the difference won't matter."

Boorum looked at Dean Folling. He shook his head, smiling. "They haven't heard much of Midwestern back East, but if this lad does what he promises your college will be famous."

Dean Folling said quickly, "You mustn't forget the relay will be there as well. Our first appearance in the Intercollegiates. The relay will make an excellent showing. As for Miller, he's made himself the runner he is. No one helped. Certainly not I."

That was when Kay Folling spoke. As Steve drew the towel more tightly about his neck she lifted her firm chin. "And only Steve Miller will reap the reward, Mr. Boorum."

Boorum's brows lifted. Steve's face did not change. "I want the best education I can get. The one that will help me most. If my running will get me a degree from one of the big universities I'll transfer."

"It'll get you that if you can do it," Boorum said. "And cash too, if that's what you want."

"It is," Steve said, and looked at Kay—at the faint, shell pink of her face.

She didn't turn her eyes from him. She spoke to Boorum: "You can say, too, that Steve Miller is Midwestern's mathematical genius. He's a walking slide rule and calculus is ABC to him. There's only one thing in mathematics he doesn't know." Her little nose tipped as she turned her eyes to Boorum. "You wouldn't believe it but he never learned the first theorem in Euclid."

Dean Folling said, "Now, Kay . . ." but Boorum grinned. "I'm afraid I've forgotten if I ever did know. What is the first theorem in Euclid?"

"The sum of the whole," Kay said, her blue eyes stormy, "is greater than any of its parts."

She walked away quickly. Dean Folling said, "You mustn't mind my daughter . . ." but Steve looked after Kay, his brow furrowed.

She was sitting on the steps of the small white house just off the campus when he drove up in his battered coupé and lifted the mower from the open back. The sun was setting, gilding the windows of the red-bricked buildings: Marcy, the Chem Lab, Purvis.

Kay didn't make any sign. Steve started at the far side of the dean's lawn and ran the swaths neatly from front to back. The blades clicked, the grass spurted in a green stream.

He raked the fallen grass, swept it into a basket. He took his broom and swept the walk. That brought him to the steps. Kay said, "I'm sorry if I was rude. Dad says I was."

Steve wiped his damp forehead. "That's all right. I guess I know how you feel."

"Do you?" Her eyes met his. He could see the soft down on

her upper lip—the deft-touched red of her mouth. “Do you? How do I feel?”

“Like everyone else, I suppose. That I’m an outsider.”

Kay said, “Oh,” and a little line appeared in her smooth forehead. He saw the way her lips came together and he felt the need, the compulsion of explaining to her, of making her understand. He said, “I don’t care what other people think; what the college thinks. They wouldn’t understand anyway. But things are different for me. I’ve got to think of myself. Of no one but myself.”

He rested against the support of the mower, looking at her. “My people have a small farm. I’ve got four brothers and a sister. I’m the oldest. I never hoped to be able to go to college. It’s only because the boys are big enough to lend a hand that I could get away at all. I wouldn’t have gone at all if my mother and dad hadn’t insisted. They’d saved a hundred dollars. Enough for my freshman tuition. I’ve hung on since, doing odd jobs, gardening in summer, furnaces in winter. Waiting on tables. Anything to let me finish—to help me get a degree—a chance to make something of myself, because there’s nothing much for any of us on the farm.”

He raised his eyes. Kay’s face was still. He said, “That’s why I’ve kept on with my running. I run because it’s a way to further myself—and no one ever helps any man but himself.”

He saw the faint gesture and he said, “I know you think I’m pretty poor stuff, but I’ve always been honest with myself. College may be bright years to remember for those who can afford it—but I can’t.”

Picking up the basket he swung the broom over his shoulder. Paul Maye’s blue roadster slid up behind Steve’s battered coupé. Kay lifted her chin. She stepped onto the cement path. Her eyes met his, blue and deep. “I’m going east with Dad and the relay. I hope I see you win. I hope you get what you want, but I still say you don’t know your Euclid. Maybe you’re built that way. I’m sorry if you are. Honestly, I am.”

She went down the walk toward the blue car and Steve looked after her, his gray eyes clouded, feeling as he always had felt, lonely and alone.

He didn't see her until they got to Boston. Kay had driven east. His first glimpse of her was in the lobby of the hotel. He saw her from within the semicircle of reporters who were easing him still farther out onto the limb. He knew they didn't believe he could do it—they didn't care. That either way all he meant to them was copy. If he made good, if he turned in the four-minute mile that was as fabulous as the golden fleece, it would be a swell story. If he failed after all he had said, it would be just as effective—to poke fun at.

The papers were carrying his picture—talking about him. That was all he asked for. The better known he became the more he would benefit.

He shared a room with Don Fletcher but they didn't have much to say to each other. Don, Red and Frank were juniors like Steve, but he didn't know them any better than Paul Maye, who was a senior. He hadn't had time for chumming around, for going places and doing things with his classmates. He knew he wasn't popular but that was just unfortunate. He had a program to accomplish.

Steve went out to Cambridge with the others that first day. Multicolored jerseys were all about. Letters of colleges that had been only names: Yale, Harvard, Penn, Fordham, Princeton, Columbia. The bright June sun gleamed on the high rise of the stadium. The cinder track was firm, springy—different from the one at Midwestern.

They were holding the trials. The big men were tossing the shot around—the jumpers were sliding over the bar. Steve paced a couple of quarters, not taking off his woollies. He was aware of the look sent his way, the smiles. There were reporters in the dressing room when he went in to shower and get his rubdown. They went into the routine again and patiently he answered them. "The track is fine," he said quietly, feeling that he didn't mean anything to them but a story, and not caring. "I'll do four minutes tomorrow."

He went back to Boston and the hotel by himself. Caught a movie and got to the hotel in time for dinner. Dean Folling was at their table, the relay men. But not Kay. Steve was glad. He

didn't say anything. Paul Maye was oddly quiet and the others took their cue from him. Steve was already in bed when Don came in and undressed in the bathroom. He didn't hear Don get into bed. He was thinking, with that feeling of loneliness heavier than ever, of Kay, and then he must have fallen asleep, for the next thing he remembered was the ring of the phone.

The sun was streaming in the windows. Don lifted the phone and Steve closed his eyes again. He heard Don say, "Yes?" and then, "Heck, no. I'll be right in."

Steve didn't move. When the door closed the room was very quiet. It was almost eight. Steve got up, showered and dressed.

When he heard the knock he said, "Come in." The knock was repeated and Steve crossed the hard carpet and turned the knob.

Kay stood framed in the door, slim in her blue print, her hair softly framing her small head. Steve felt the disturbance her presence always created in him, ever since she had come from prep school to join the small student body at Midwestern.

He said, "Hello," and waited, his gray eyes steady.

Kay put her hand on his arm. "Steve, you've got to do something for me. You've got to."

Her voice shook. Steve drew a deep breath. He said, "All right Anything."

"It's Paul." Her lashes flickered. "He wasn't well yesterday. This morning he's worse. Sick. It's his appendix. The hotel doctor says it has to come out—immediately. But Paul won't go." Her clasp tightened. She said, "Please come. You've got to tell him you'll run for him. Just say that you will."

Her fingers urged him from the door. Only for a moment did Steve hesitate, his lean face hardening. Then he closed the door and went down the corridor with her.

Dean Folling was in the room, Don, Red and Frank and a youthful man Steve knew must be the hotel physician. He recognized in Paul's face what had struck him the night before—a pallor under the tan of his fair skin.

Red was speaking in his jerky way: "Be yourself. So we don't run. What's the tragedy? We've done 3:18 twice. That'll give us a nice sixth or seventh against this bunch. Phooey. Dry up

and tell the doc it's okay to carve you. We don't give a hoot if we don't run."

Against the pillow Paul's face looked gray. He said weakly, "Yes you do. And I do. It's my team—the first Midwestern's ever had to qualify for the big time. I don't expect us to win. But the team's got to run. I'm not going to any hospital."

His head turned on the pillow. The doctor said, "You're talking like a kid. You've got a hot worm in your middle that's got to come out before it starts real mischief." He lifted his shoulders. "You couldn't run from the bed to the door."

"Not now," Paul said, and Steve saw the tears of weakness and anger in his eyes. "But maybe it'll pass. I'll be able to run this afternoon."

"The hell you say," the doctor said cheerfully, but his eyes were anxious as he looked at Dean Folling.

The dean said, "Now, Maye . . ." but Paul broke in, his head whipping against the pillow, "I can't let the team down, sir. I can't."

That was when Kay spoke. She moved quickly to the bed. "Don't be dumb. Midwestern will be there. Steve's going to sub for you." She turned her head, her hand on Paul's shoulder. Her eyes met Steve's. "Aren't you?"

Steve didn't hesitate. Somewhere within him was the echo of a great laugh—a laugh directed at him—but he said, "I'll do my best, Maye."

Paul said, "You can't run both. You'll kill your mile."

"That's my lookout," Steve said quietly. "I'll sub for you if you'll do as you're told."

He saw the tears gather in Paul's eyes. As he turned his head angrily to hide them Paul said, "Thanks. Okay." The doctor picked up the phone. "We'll have the appendix out for you in an hour." He nodded toward the door and Dean Folling said, "We're going now, Maye. Don't worry. Everything will be all right."

The corridor was quiet and dim. Red said, "Thanks for saying that, Miller. He wouldn't have gone otherwise."

Steve nodded. "We'd better go out early. I'd like a couple of lessons at baton passing."

He saw Don and Frank look at him. Kay said, "You don't have to run. I only wanted you to say you would so Paul would agree to the operation."

"Sure," Red said, and Steve heard the others murmur. A sudden anger flared in him. He said distinctly, "I told Maye I'd sub for him I'm going to." He didn't care what they thought, either.

"But listen," Red said, "your mile . . ."

"I'm running," Steve said. "I don't go back on my word. Suppose you fellows tell me what to do."

He had known the word would spread. It had to. He was lying on a rubbing table, a blanket over him when the dressing room began to fill. The sharp smell of rubdown, of wintergreen and witch hazel, the sound of voices and laughter were all about when the reporters found him. He listened, his eyes closed. He knew what they were thinking—was not surprised when they said it. He didn't contradict. He didn't deny. He only said, "I'm anchoring our relay." And when they asked about the mile, he said, "I'll probably scratch."

He had been 'way out on a limb and he'd sawed it behind him before his race was run. He was aware of the looks, the laughter as the afternoon wore on. The sprinters came back. The call went up for the hurdlers, the jumpers. Then Red touched his shoulder. Red looked down at him and said, "Here's where we go. There's still time to scratch. It'll be okay with us, Steve . . ."

Steve shook his head but he was aware of a queer warmth. There was no doubt in Red's voice. He said, "We're running. To win," and Red said, "Okay. We'll give it everything we've got."

The bright sun made Steve blink. The grass was emerald, the stadium white and dotted with colorful groups and masses. And on the field moved the multijerseyed runners and field men.

They'd drawn the Number 3 lane. Standing with Red and Frank, Steve saw Don on the mark. Fordham, N.Y.U., Manhattan, Penn and Maine. The others didn't count. He was aware of a nervousness he had never felt before. He couldn't identify it. He had always been so cool, thinking out his race, planning it.

He looked up at the stands but he could not see Kay. And somewhere in Boston Paul Maye was lying in a white bed, fighting the effects of the ether. His lips hardened. He knew what the evening papers would say—but he didn't care. He had a job to do. He had given his word.

The crack of the gun brought his eyes back to the track. The jumble at the turn dissolved and Red cried chokingly, "Go it, Don. Go it, you mug." The green-and-gold jersey two steps in front of the flying legs, the straining torsos, was Don Fletcher. Frank Donlan bent to rub his leg muscles, took a few steps gingerly and went slowly out on the track. Steve could not take his eyes from the green-and-gold jersey. His nails bit into his palms. The loud-speaker boomed but he didn't hear.

Red was talking to himself "Steady, lug. Don't jitter your leg before you run it. Don't . . . okay . . . okay . . ."

The line of runners on the mark moved down, irregularly toward the broken field coming toward it. The two lines meshed, mingled. The melee cleared and Steve drew a deep breath. Frank was out in front, shifting the baton to his left hand, three yards in the clear. Don was lying on the cinders, trying to get up. Steve ran with Red to help him, taking him from the officials. Don was gasping, his chest straining. Red said, "Good stuff. Oh, good stuff, guy."

Red left them when Don was on the grass. He nodded to Steve, his hair redder than ever because of the paleness of his face. "We'll keep the lead, Steve. Don't worry." Then he was out on the track with the dancing, gesticulating others and Frank was coming into the stretch, four yards to the good.

Steve pulled off his pants. His legs felt weak. He heard Don wheeze, "Good luck," and saw Frank coming, wobbling toward them. He walked out onto the track, turned sideways to the stretch. He was nervous, shaken. He never had been that way before. He'd always had only himself to consider—his own race to run—to win or lose. But now he was part of a team—and the race wasn't all his. It belonged to Red and Don and Frank as well. To Paul. And to Midwestern.

He heard the roar of the crowd. Then he saw Red's flaming head

round the turn. He still had the advantage. Still led by the four yards Frank had given him. Steve moved down the track.

Red's face was tortured. Steve put out his hand and started moving back toward the start. He looked down. He knew Red would keep from him. His fingers touched the cylinder, tightened. He said, "Right," and felt the restraint of Red's grasp vanish. Then he was looking up the track, his legs stretching.

The baton felt strange. He tightened his grasp and lengthened out, striding, striding. "Keep your form," he muttered mentally. "Don't tighten. It's the fellows' race. Keep it for them. They ran their heads off. Don't botch it."

At the turn he eased off the pace he had been pouring on. This was old stuff. His nervousness vanished. He had a lot left but he had to save it. Striding easily he saw the far turn coming at him, distant. The training of years stood him in good stead. He didn't panic, thinking of those flying figures behind him, striving to cut down the gap. Those anchor men whose names were famous wherever track fans met. The turn loomed, the last furlong was ahead.

He began to stretch, still keeping his form, trying his damndest not to tighten. He poured it on, sprinting now, just as he had planned he would do in the mile he had promised them. The mile they were grinning at now. He saw the tape ahead, the knot of officials behind the finish posts at either side. The tape came toward him and he thought, "Don't ease. Through—run through." Then the red wool was taut before his chest and he was past it, carrying a wisp with him, letting his speed spend itself.

He was far up the track when the others got to him. Red, Don and Frank, hugging him, yelling. Frank had his pants. Frank helped him on with them. Red was saying, over and over, "Man, oh, man. Into the ground, Steve. You ran 'em into the ground. Fifteen yards or I'm a redheaded liar."

Officials streamed toward them. One put out his hand for the baton but Steve shook his head. "I'm keeping this," he panted. The crowd stood, applauding. And then suddenly the loud-speaker boomed and silence came . . . "Mile relay. Won by Midwestern College . . . second, Fordham . . . third, Manhat-

tan . . . fourth, Pennsylvania . . . fifth, New York University . . . Time . . .” The hush intensified. “Establishing a new Intercollegiate and World’s record . . .” The crowd’s indrawn breath was almost audible . . . “Three minutes, eleven seconds . . . flat . . .”

The cheer that broke was deafening. Then the radioman was on them, holding out his mike. “Miller, say something, will you? When are you going to give us that mile? You did better than 47 for your quarter. Say something—the whole country’s waiting . . .”

Kay and Dean Folling were in the cool white room where Paul’s face grinned up from the raised pillow. Kay said, “We listened. It—oh—it was wonderful.”

Red said, “Told you it’d be okay, Paul. We wowed them.”

“My team,” Paul said. “My team.”

He looked at Steve, his eyes shining and Steve held out the baton. “I thought you might want this.”

Paul took it in white fingers. “In a glass case, all by itself in Harlow. What are cups or medals? This ran the race. Thanks, Steve. It’s the best present that I have ever received.” The delight faded from his face. He said, “I appreciate what you did. You’d have done that mile. But you’ve still got another year.”

“We’re going to defend next year,” Steve said. “There’ll be lots of miles at other meets.”

He nodded and went out, closing the door behind him. He had never felt like this before. Felt that he wasn’t alone, that there were others pulling for him, helping him, and himself pulling for them, fighting with them. It was a grand feeling.

He heard Kay call. Her hair lifted as she ran, her heels clicking against the linoleum. She smiled up at him, “Oh, Steve . . . you . . . you . . .” She couldn’t go on. She looked at him, wide-eyed, and then she said, “I was so wrong about you. I thought you were selfish and standoffish. Self-centered. I thought you didn’t like any of us . . . didn’t like Midwestern . . . or me . . .”

“You,” Steve said. He put his hands in his pockets. “I like

you too much. I always have. Since I first saw you."

He saw her lips curve, heard her soft, "I'm glad." He said honestly, "You weren't wrong. I guess I just didn't know. I was so used to going it alone I didn't realize maybe others helped sometimes. Made things easier, better . . ."

"That's what Dad said," Kay told him. "He said you'd find yourself . . . find out for yourself . . . but me . . ."

She put her arm through his. "Steve, could we have dinner together? Dutch. I—there's such a lot we've got to talk about."

"I'd like it," Steve said. He gulped. "Kay . . . I know what you meant about Euclid. I'd never thought of it like that before. But you were right. The sum of the whole is greater than any of its parts. Every time."

Kay smiled, pressing his arm against her side as they walked to the lifts. "Sometimes though," she said seriously, "one part is so great it's practically the whole. You could say it is."

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. The theme of this story is stated twice in the form of a proposition from Euclid. This proposition is a generalized statement of truth. Make it more particular by putting into the sentence specific terms from this story in place of "sum of the whole," and "any of its parts." Now it makes more literally clear what the theme of the story is.

2. What new discovery did Steve make by running for Paul and the team and the school? How would he have felt if his team, after all, had lost in the relay?

3. When Steve cast his fortunes with the team, he "felt that he wasn't alone. . . . It was a grand feeling." But in the author's eyes this feeling is not sufficient reward. He throws in the girl. Is the story weaker or stronger for that fact? Should he have thrown in the mile run, too?

4. When the fellows assumed that Steve would not make good his promise to run for Paul, "a sudden anger flared in him." What angered him? "He didn't care what they thought, either." Who are "they," and what *would* they think?

5. There is a definite struggle in this story. What are the two forces struggling against each other? At what point are you sure of the outcome?

6. Use the dictionary for: furlong, harassed, fedora, fabulous, torsos, melee, gesticulating.

FOR YOUR VOCABULARY

In "The Four-Minute Mile" are many terms associated with track. If there is a track man in the class, let him explain the following terms. If not, look them up and add them to your sports vocabulary: *furlong*, *scratch*, *sprint*, *anchor*, *stretch* (noun), *pole*, *baton*.

SOMETHING TO DO

Think up a situation in which a character has to make some important decision, like that of Steve Miller, who had to choose between acting for himself alone, and acting for the good of the group. This would be the basis for what we call a "psychological plot," since both of the opposing forces are in the mind of a single character. Block out the plot by setting down the events of the struggle, leading up to the scene in which the character finally makes a decision. This scene would be the climax if you were to complete the story.

FOR FURTHER READING: STORIES ABOUT SPORTS

If you are a track enthusiast, you no doubt know the work of John R. Tunis. His two books about a track hero, *Iron Duke* and *Iron Duke Returns*, are excellent reading. You would also enjoy *Split Seconds*, by Jackson Scholz. For baseball and boxing fans, there are of course the stories of Ring Lardner, some of which are mentioned on page 274. If you enjoy hunting and fishing, read *Tales of Rod and Gun*, by Harry McGuire. Leonard H. Robbins' *Mountains and Men* and James Ramsey Ullman's *High Conquest* deal with mountain climbing; the latter book has beautiful illustrations. The fencing enthusiast will enjoy Wythe Williams' short story, "Splendid with Swords"; and for those interested in polo there is Rudyard Kipling's "The Maltese Cat," which has been called the greatest sports story ever written. These two short stories are contained in the first of the following books about sports in general: *Just for Sport*, by Wood, Bacon, and Cameron; *The American Sporting Scene*, by John Kieran; *Farewell to Sport*, by Paul Gallico; *The Omnibus of Sport*, by Grantland Rice and Harford Powell; *Playing the Game*, by Mullen and Lanz; and *The Sporting Gesture*, by Thomas L. Stix.

MISERY AND THE DEVIL

From *Don Segundo Sombra*

Ricardo Güiraldes

(Translated by *Harriet de Onis*)

If a Russian—or a Chinese, or an Argentinean—wished to acquire a better understanding of the people of the United States, he might well read some of our great novels and short stories: *Huckleberry Finn*, *Main Street*, *Grapes of Wrath*, the stories of O. Henry or Ring Lardner. Similarly we, in our turn, can learn about the Russians—or the Chinese, or the Argentineans—by reading the great stories in their literatures. The great literature of any people is an open door to an understanding of that people's culture: its customs, its traditions, its spiritual qualities, its history.

If we wish to be "good neighbors" with our fellow Americans to the south, we need to familiarize ourselves with their culture, which is in a tradition quite different from ours. Our inheritance is primarily from England; theirs, primarily from Spain and Portugal. Just as Englishmen and Spaniards, with different backgrounds and points of view, may easily misjudge and misunderstand each other, so we and the South Americans cannot achieve understanding and friendship without effort. One step in the right direction is to acquaint ourselves with each other's cultural heritage as recorded in our several literatures.

To start you toward an understanding of our South American neighbors, I offer you the following story. It is a tall tale as told by a gaucho on the Argentine pampas. By the reading of this one story you will not achieve any deep understanding of Argentine character, but even this small bit of gaucho literature may suggest to you something of the differences between the Argentine cultural heritage and our own. I feel sure that you will find this tall tale different in many ways from our own tall tales of Pecos Bill and Paul Bunyan.

And you may reasonably conclude that the Argentine gaucho is equally different from our North American cowboy.

Be sure not to mistake the simple gaucho's familiarity toward Jesus and St. Peter for disrespect or irreverence. The gaucho is a man with a deeply religious nature.

I found this story in the novel, *Don Segundo Sombra*, which is the great classic of the Argentine gaucho. In that novel, Don Segundo and his young companion pitched camp one evening under the old paradise trees of an abandoned farm. They turned the horses loose, roasted their meat, and brewed their tea. Finally Don Segundo said, "I'm going to tell you a story. This happened in the days of our Lord Jesus Christ and his Apostles."

OUR LORD, they say, was the sower of kindness; and he'd ride from town to town, from ranch to ranch, teaching the gospels through the Holy Land, and healing with his word. He'd take St. Peter along with him on these rides as his helper, for he was fond of him, as he was mighty faithful and obliging.

On one of these rides, they say (and they were as hard as a herder's), just as they were cantering into a town the mule of our Lord lost a shoe and began to limp. "Watch out for a smithy," our Lord told St. Peter, "we're getting into town." St. Peter kept his eyes open and pretty soon he saw an old ranch, all tumbled-down walls, and over the door was a sign that said: BLACK-SMITH. He hurried to tell the Master, and they stopped at the corral.

"Ave María!" they called. A little cur came barking out and then an old man, all in rags, and asked them in. "Good afternoon," said our Lord, "how about shoeing my mule for me, that's lost a shoe?" "Get off and come in," said the old one, "and I'll see about it."

They passed in, and sat down on the chairs with shaky twisted legs. "What's your name?" asked Jesus. "My name is Misery," the old one answered, and he went out to get what he needed. The poor servant of the Lord rummaged all over the place, in boxes, in bags, in corners, but he could not find what he needed to make a shoe. He was coming back to beg pardon of the waiting ones

when, poking around with his foot in a lot of rubbish, he saw a ring of silver—a big one!

"Now what are you doing there?" says he, picking it up; and he fired his forge, melted the ring, hammered it into a shoe and nailed it on the mule of our Lord. Smart old fox he was!

"How much do we owe you, my good man?" asks our Lord.

Misery looks him over from head to foot. "Looks to me," he says, "like you two fellows are about as poor as I am. What the devil should I charge you? Go in peace. Maybe some day God will remember."

"So be it," said our Lord, and they got on their mules and jogged along. After a stretch, this chap St. Peter, who wasn't any too bright, says: "Look here, Jesus, we're ungrateful. This here old fellow has put a silver shoe on your mule and not charged us a cent, and he's poorer than poor, and we've gone off without leaving him a thing to remember us by."

"It's the truth," said our Lord. "Let's go back and give him three wishes, whatever he likes." Misery, seeing them return, thought they must have lost the shoe, and asked them in again. Our Lord explained why they came, and the old boy looked at him out of the tail of his eye, not knowing whether to get mad or to laugh. "Now think," says our Lord, "before you make your wish." St. Peter, who was sitting by him, whispers in his ear: "Ask for Paradise." "Shut up, you," says Misery under his breath, and then he says to our Lord:

"I wish that whoever sits down in my chair shan't be able to get up unless I say so." "Granted," says our Lord. "Now the next wish. Be careful." "Ask for Paradise," St. Peter whispers again. "Mind your own business!" the old one snaps, and then turns to our Lord. "I wish that anyone climbing into my walnut tree outside shan't be able to get down unless I say so." "Granted," says our Lord. "And now the third and last wish. Don't hurry."

"You stubborn mule, ask for Paradise," whispers St. Peter again. "You old idiot, shut up!" says Misery, getting mad, and then to our Lord: "I wish that whoever gets into my tobacco pouch here shan't be able to get out unless I say so." "Granted," says our Lord, and they take their leave and go.

Well, no sooner was Misery alone than he begins to think things over; before long he's as mad as a broncho that he did not make better use of his three wishes. "I'm a fool," he cries and throws his hat on the floor. "If the devil came here right now, I'd sell him my soul for twenty years more to live and all the cash I wanted!" Straight off, a gentleman knocks at the door of the ranch and says: "Misery, I can give you a contract for what you ask." And he pulls a roll of paper from his pocket, all covered with letters and figures, in the very best style. They read it over together, and agree about the terms, and each of them signs fair and square over a seal at the bottom of the roll.

Well, no sooner was the devil gone and Misery alone again, than he stumbles on the bag of gold that Mandinga¹ has left him; and looks at himself in the duck puddle and finds that he's a youth! So off he goes to town, buys himself a new suit, hires a room in the hotel like a gentleman, and that night he sleeps happy.

Boy, you should have seen how his life changed! He chummed with princes and governors and mayors. He bet more than anyone else on all the races. He traveled round the world and had a good time with the daughters of kings and dukes. . . . But years run fast at that sort of game, and now the twentieth year was up; and so one day when Misery happened to drop in at his old hovel to have a good laugh at it, the devil turns up, calling himself Señor Lili, pulls out his contract and asks for payment.

Misery was a man of his word, although he felt a little blue; so he invited Lili to have a chair while he washes and changes his suit; for he wanted to go to hell looking decent. And as he rubs himself down, he thinks that there is no lasso doesn't break at the end, and all his good times are over. When he comes back, there was Lili sitting in the chair, patiently waiting. "All right," says he, "shall we get going?" "How the devil can we go," says Lili, "when I'm stuck in this chair like I was bewitched?" Then Misery remembers the three wishes of the man with the mule, and he nearly falls over laughing. "Get up, rascal," he taunts him. "You're the devil, ain't you?" And Lili rocked back and forth

¹ Mandinga: familiar Spanish name for the devil.

staring at Misery, but he could not budge an inch and he was sweating like a butcher.

"All right, now," says the old boy that used to be a blacksmith, "I'll tell you. We'll just sign for another twenty years and all the cash I want." The devil had to do as Misery commanded, and then he got leave to go. Once more, the old boy was young and rolling in silver, and he began the rounds of the gay world. He hobnobbed with princes and magnates, spilled money like no one else, and played with the daughters of kings and great merchants. But the years fly when they are happy, and now the twentieth year was over, and Misery set out for his old smithy to keep his word.

Meanwhile Lili, who was a gossip, had told them all in hell about the haunted chair. "You got to keep your eyes skinned," said Lucifer; "that old boy's a fox, and he's got a pull somewhere. This time two had better go to make him keep the contract." So Misery found two devils waiting for him at his ranch, one of them Lili.

"Come in," says he, "and have a seat while I get washed and fixed up to go to hell in proper fashion."

"I'm not sitting," says Señor Lili.

"Just as you say. Go out and wait in the yard, then, and help yourselves to some of my walnuts; they're the best you've ever ate in your devil's lifetime."

Lili was a bit shy, but his friend said he'd take a turn in the yard and taste the nuts if any were lying on the ground. Pretty soon, he comes back and says he has found a handful and nobody could deny that they were the most savory walnuts in the world. So the two go out and start hunting; but devil a nut more do they find! At last Lili's friend, whose mouth was watering, says he is going up the tree to get more. Lili warned him to watch out, but the greedy-gut paid no attention, and up he goes into the tree and begins stuffing and saying, every once in a while: "Golly, they're good. Golly, they're good!" "Throw me a few," shouts Lili from below. "There goes one." "Throw me some more!" begs Lili. "I'm too busy," says the greedy-gut. "If you want any,

climb the tree and get 'em." Lili hesitates a second, and then up he goes.

Pretty soon Misery walks out and when he sees the two devils in the walnut tree, he lets out a laugh! "At your orders," he shouts. "I'm ready when you are" "But we can't get down," say the two devils, who were like stuck to the branches. "That's fine," says Misery. "All we got to do now is sign another contract for twenty years and all the money I want." And the devils did what he asked, and then he let them go.

All over again came the running round the world and the hobnobbing with swell folk and the making love to the grand ladies. But the years rolled just as fast as before, and when the twentieth was up Misery went back to pay his debt to the smithy where once he had worked by the sweat of his brow.

Meantime, the devils had told Lucifer the whole story, and Lucifer was angry. "Hell!" he said, "didn't I warn you chaps to watch your step because the man was a fox? This time, we'll all go with you."

So when Misery got to his cabin, there were more folks there than at a round-up. But they were all drawn up like an army, and at the orders of a leader who wore a crown. Hell's camping at my house, he thought, and he looked at the devils' gang like a dog at a whip. If I come through this time, he thought, I'm saved for good. But he wasn't as cool as he made out to be when he walks up to them and asks: "Are you looking for me?"

"We are!" shouts the guy with the crown.

"I never signed any contract with you, that you should come burning candles at my funeral."

"You're coming with me, for I'm the king of the devils!"

"How do I know?" says Misery. "If you're really who you say, why don't you prove it? Get all the devils inside yourself, for instance, and turn yourself into an ant."

Anyone else would have been suspicious, I reckon. But bad ones, they say, lose their head easy with pride and anger. Lucifer was fighting mad, and gave a yell; and before you knew it, he was an ant and all the other devils were inside him.

Without delay, Misery grabbed the little beast who was crawling

over the bricks of the floor, and stuck it into his tobacco pouch. He laid the pouch on the anvil in his smithy, picked up a hammer, and began pounding away with all his might till his shirt ran sweat.

Then he washed up, changed his clothes and went for a walk around the town. And every day the sly old fox slapped that pouch on the anvil and gave it such a drubbing that he had to change his shirt again and take another walk around town to cool off.

This went on for years.

And the result was, that in his town there were no fights, no law suits, no slander. Husbands did not beat their women, nor mothers their children. Uncles, cousins, stepchildren, got along as God asks; spooks and pigs stayed in their own sties; nobody saw a ghost; the sick got well, and the old folks did not die. Neighbors never argued, horses kicked their heels only in happiness, and everything ran like a rich man's watch. They didn't even have to clean the wells, for all water was good.

There's no road without a turn, no destiny without tears; and so it came about that the lawyers, the district attorneys, the justices of the peace, the cure-alls and medicos—all the important ones, in fact, who live off the troubles and vices of the people, began to get so hungry you could count their ribs, and to die off. One day, the ones that were left of this vermin were so scared that they marched up to the Governor to ask for help. The Governor, who was of the same breed, said there was nothing he could do, gave them some of the people's money and warned them not to come for more, because it was not the State's business to feed them. Months went by, and by now the lawyers and judges and such-like brutes were getting real scarce, for most of them had shuffled off, I hope, to a better life. At last, one of them, the biggest scamp of the lot, got wind of the truth and invited the others to the Governor's again, promising them that this time they would win.

When they were all in His Excellency's presence, the lawyer told them how this calamity had befallen them: it was because the blacksmith Misery had all the devils of hell shut tight in his pouch.

You can bet the Governor lost no time having Misery brought

in, and in front of them all, he let loose: "Oh ho! So it's you," says he. "A nice mess you're making of the world with your conjures,² you old scamp. You put things back the way they were, and quit trying to right wrongs and chastise devils. Don't you see the world, being what it is, can't get along—not for a minute—without evil and laws and sickness? And that those who live by them, and there's aplenty, need to have the devils trotting round? You get back to your ranch this minute, as fast as you can, and let hell out of your tobacco pouch!"

Misery saw that the Governor was right; he confesses to the truth and hurries home to obey. He was bored anyway with the world, and too old to care if he did leave it. But before he let the devils out, he slapped the old pouch on the anvil and gave it a last good drubbing till his shirt ran sweat.

"If I let you loose," says he to the mandingas, "are you going to hang around here any more?"

"No!" they all shouted like one. "Let us out and you'll never see us again." So Misery opened the pouch and told them to come. Out hopped the little ant and swelled till he was the Bad One, and then from Lucifer's body burst all the little devils, and the herd of them stampeded down that street of God's world, rolling up clouds of dust like a windstorm.

Well, we're getting to the end. . . .

The day came when Misery was at the last gasp of his kettle, for every Christian soon or late must hand in his bones, and this one certainly had made use of his! Thinking that the best way, Misery lay down on his heap of rags to wait for death. He was too weary and bored, there in his old shack, even to take the trouble to get up for food and drink. He just lay and gradually shriveled up, till his body was as hard and stiff as a mummy.

And so, having left his body behind for the worms, Misery thought, what next? And, being no fool, he made straight for heaven. He got there after a long ride and knocked at the gate. As soon as St. Peter opened, they recognized each other, but the old rascal figured it might be just as well not to remember, so he acted blithe and begged to come in.

² conjures: conjurations; i.e., magic tricks.

"Hm," says St. Peter, "when I last saw you in your smithy with our Lord and told you to ask for Paradise, you said: 'Shut up, old fool.' It's not that I hold it against you; but it's against the rules to give a man heaven when he's turned it down three times."

Without a word more, the keeper of the blessed gates slammed them shut and Misery, thinking that of two evils one should choose the lesser, went down to purgatory. But, brother, when he got there, they told him they could admit only souls that were ticketed for heaven; and as this glory was not to be his who had three times refused it they were sorry but they could not invite him in. It looked like eternal torments in hell. So Misery squared his back and went to hell, pounding on the door the way he used to pound his pouch on the anvil to make the devils holler. The door opened at last, and Misery got mad when he found himself face to face with Lili.

"Damn my luck," he shouted; "wherever I go, I've got acquaintances." But Lili thought of the poundings on the anvil and lit out with his tail behind him like a pennant, and never stopped till he got to the feet of Lucifer. He told him who was knocking to get in.

The whole damned devils' herd was scared; the Prince of Darkness himself remembered the blows of that hammer and began to yell like a broody hen, and ordered all the doors shut against the nuisance.

There was Misery with no place to go, for they had turned him down in heaven, in purgatory, and in hell. And that's why from that day to this Misery and Poverty remain on earth, and they'll never leave, for no one will take them in.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. In what ways is this tall tale different from the North American tall tales you have read?

2. What did you learn about the Argentine gaucho? What items gave you knowledge of the gaucho's opinions of certain professions? How does this story indicate, on the part of the gaucho, a simple but genuine religious faith?

3. Point out some places in the story which made you laugh.

4. To what extent did the supernatural elements seem real to you? How much "willing suspension of disbelief" do you think Don Segundo expected of his listeners?

5. Name some other stories you have read in which a character was given three wishes, or three guesses, or three chances. Why do you suppose so many stories have three for an important number?

FOR YOUR VOCABULARY

In this story the Devil is called *Lucifer*. This name is also found in the common phrase, "as proud as Lucifer." A commoner name is *Satan*. In "Faust" you hear of *Mephistopheles*, who is Satan's first assistant. What is the meaning of "lucifer" in the line, "While you've a lucifer to light your fag," from "Pack Up Your Troubles in Your Old Kit Bag"?

Certain interesting words connected with devils are: *demon*, *fiend*, *hoodoo*, *voodoo*, *exorcise*, *witchcraft*, "hexing." Look these up and add them to your vocabulary.

The following words are synonyms for *devilish*: *fiendish*, *demoniac*, *satanic*, *diabolical*, *ghoulish*. In what ways do they differ from each other?

SOMETHING TO DO

In the stories which you have read in this book there have been many scenes which have been suggested but not recorded in conversation. For one of these scenes write the conversation which might have taken place. For instance, you might write one of the conversations between Misery and the devil in this story, or the conversation between Mr. and Mrs. Mummery (in "Suspicion") that would follow his recognition of her guilt. Before you hand in your paper, proof-read it to make sure that you have handled paragraphing, quotation marks, and capital letters correctly.

THE KNIVES

Valentine Katayev

(Translated by *Basil Creighton*)

Here are found all the ingredients of romance: a poor but dashing hero, a gipsy fortune teller, a shy and beautiful maiden, and her stern and ambitious parents. In addition we get a glimpse into the new Russia, and the picture is a gay one. Read this story with a light heart. It is one of the few stories in this collection in which boy meets girl, boy gets girl. How he does so will make you chuckle.

A SUNDAY's stroll in the public gardens is the very thing to show what a man's good for.

Pashka Kokushkin began his Sunday's stroll in the Fresh Ponds at six in the evening. First of all he went to the open-air Mosselprom Pavilion and drank a bottle of beer. That at once showed a proper attitude to life and also his moderation.

Then he bought two packets of roasted sunflower seeds from a woman and walked at a leisurely pace along the main avenue. On the way he spoke to a gipsy.

"Let me read your hand, my fine young gentleman. I'll tell you all the truth. I'll tell you what your heart is set on and I'll tell you what's on your mind. I'll tell you it all and hide nothing, and you've only to give the old gipsy ten kopeks for the pleasure it'll be to you. If I tell your fortune, all will be well with you. If I don't, you'll be sorry."

Pashka thought it over.

"Fortune telling is rubbish and—a silly superstition. All the same, here's a copper for you. You can carry on, though you'll only tell a pack of lies."

The gipsy put the coin in the pocket of her garish skirt and showed her black teeth.

"There's a pleasant meeting in store for you, young man, and because of this meeting your heart will have sorrow. An old man stands in your way, but don't fear anything. Fear only the knife. The knife will cause you a lot of trouble. Don't fear your friends—fear your enemies, and the green parrot will bring you luck. Go on your way with a brave heart!"

The gipsy bent her lean body forward and walked away with dignity, shuffling the soles of her dusky feet over the ground.

"Lies well, the rascal," Pashka said, winked, laughed out loud and went on his way.

As he went he sampled all the pleasures life had to offer. First he weighed himself on a rickety weighing machine; it registered a hundred and seventy-five pounds. Then he tried his strength and, nearly sinking to his knees with the exertion, he made the quivering pointer reach "strong man." After this he strolled on for a while and tested his nerves with electricity. He grasped the brass rod with both hands; there was a tingling in his wrists and a tickling as of ants, his wrists filled with soda water, his palms stuck to the brass rod—but his nerves were proved to be strong.

Finally he sat on a chair in front of a back-cloth suspended from a tree and displaying the Kremlin as seen from the Stone Bridge, crossed his legs, made a very fierce face and had his photograph taken. In ten minutes Pashka received the still wet print and gazed upon it for a long time with great satisfaction: his check cap, his own familiar nose, his Apache shirt with open collar, his coat—all faultless—pleased him well. It was not easy to believe that this strikingly handsome fellow and himself were one and the same.

"Not bad," he said as he carefully rolled up the sticky photograph and marched off to the landing stage.

To exhaust the stock of Sunday delights Pashka had now only to ogle some girls as they passed and take them for a row. Meanwhile he walked on and arrived at an unusually popular booth. A crowd blocked its wide-open doors. The ring of metal and loud laughter could be heard from within.

"What's going on here?" Pashka asked an undersized Red Guardsman who was pushing his way in.

"Throwing rings. It's a game. If you throw straight you get a samovar."

Pashka peered inquisitively into the brilliantly lighted interior over the heads of the crowd. The whole of the back wall was hung with red cotton. In front of it were three tiers of knives stuck on end. Among the knives enticing prizes were displayed. On the lowest tier—boxes, sweetmeats, cakes; on the middle one—alarm clocks, casseroles, caps; and on the top one, just below the roof in semi-darkness, particularly seductive articles—two balalaikas, a Tula samovar, yellow elastic-sided boots, an Italian concertina, a cuckoo-clock and a gramophone. You threw the rings and if you got one over a knife you won the article lying beside it. But it was almost impossible to throw a ring over a knife, for the knives were very flexible and the rings rebounded from them. Most amusing!

Pashka elbowed his way into the booth. A little old man with silver spectacles on his nose stood behind the counter, giving out the rings, forty throws for twenty-five kopeks. A heated young man with a moist shock of hair was laughing uproariously as he threw his last five rings. His coat flapped, the metal rings flew from his clumsy fingers, struck against the knives and fell with a clatter into the sack hanging beneath. The gaping throng laughed. The young fellow's face flushed. The knives rang and vibrated in ever-widening circles as the rings struck them.

"Devil take the knives and the rings too," the fellow cried out at last. "There's a ruble and a half chucked away. I might at least have got a Balaev cake!" And he vanished crestfallen among the crowd.

"Last Sunday someone won a pair of boots," said a youth in patched trousers, "and spent ten rubles to get them."

"Let me have a go," Pashka said, pushing his way up to the counter. "Just for the fun of the thing."

The old man handed him the rings.

"Now then," Pashka asked prosily, "if you hit a knife at the bottom, you win a Balaev cake. Is that it?"

"That's so," the old man said with indifference.

"And next row, an alarm clock?"

The old man nodded.

"Fine. And for a samovar, I suppose, you have to aim right under the roof?"

"Get your cake first. Then you can start talking," someone in the crowd remarked impatiently. "Get on! Make a start!"

Pashka put his photograph down on the counter, pushed the crowd aside with his elbows, took his stance, aimed—but suddenly the ring flew from his grasp, fell on its side and rolled away. Pashka had turned to stone. On a chair beside the shelves, with her hands demurely folded in her lap, sat a young, smartly dressed girl, whose beauty was such that his eyes were blinded. The girl got up quickly from her chair, picked up the ring and handed it back to Pashka without raising her eyes, but at the last moment she smiled faintly and stealthily, only with the corners of her mouth—and Pashka was a lost man.

"Now then, what's up with you? Get on and win your samovar," the eager onlookers shouted behind him.

Pashka awoke and began to sling the rings one after the other, seeing nothing but the girl's lowered eyelids and her little mouth arched in the middle like a cherry. When he had thrown all forty rings she collected them and put them silently on the counter. But this time she did not smile. She only raised her grey eyes to Pashka and stroked back an ash-blond lock that had fallen forward from behind her ear. Pashka paid another twenty-five kopeks. The rings flew at random. The gaping crowd laughed and surged at his back. The knives hummed like bees. The old man scratched his nose in complete indifference with a hooked forefinger.

When he had squandered a ruble and not made a single hit Pashka forlornly left the crowd and walked under the lime trees along by the water which was dyed a rosy pink with the sunset. A light mist lay over the pond. The air was cool about his ears. The lights of a cinema were reflected as pillars of flame in the tinted water. Girls in twos with short-cropped heads and green and blue combs in their hair and their arms round each other's

waists passed Pashka and nudged each other and turned round to giggle at him, "Isn't he too lovely, that boy." But Pashka went on without paying any attention and hummed to himself in a dream:

"The gipsy told your fortune, the gipsy told your fortune, the gipsy told your fortune, gazing on your hand."

Before the night was over he had lost his heart finally and irrevocably.

For a whole month Pashka went to the booth every Sunday to throw the rings. He threw half his earnings away. He did not take his holiday—he had quite forgotten it was his turn. He became quite crazy. The girl handed him the rings with lowered eyes as before. Only sometimes she smiled as if to herself. And sometimes when she suddenly caught sight of Pashka in the crowds she blushed so deeply that even her shoulders through the thin muslin seemed to glow like dark-cheeked peaches. In spite of all he could do, Pashka never succeeded in having a private word with her; either people got in the way or else the old man was watching them over his spectacles with angry eyes, scratching his nose at the same time with his hooked finger, as though threatening and warning Pashka: "Keep your hands off the girl. She is not for you. Get out of it." But once Pashka did succeed in speaking to her for one second. There were not many people there and the old man had just run round to the back of the booth with a birch to chase away the ragged children.

"Pardon me," Pashka said and his heart stood still, "what is your name?"

"Ludmilla," the girl whispered quickly with glowing cheeks. "I know you well. You once left your photograph behind on the counter and I've kept it. I've lost my heart completely—it's so beautiful."

She put one finger to her neck and pointed to the corner of the crumpled print against her collar bone. When she looked up she was blushing like a rose. "And what's your name?"

"Pashka. Won't you come to the Coliseum with me? It's quite a good piece: The Woman With the Millions."

"I couldn't. Father never lets me out of his sight."

"Come all the same."

"God forbid! If I went out he would never let me in again. And Mother is even worse. She has a stall at Sucharev Market in her own name. It's horrible how strict parents are. Simply frightful. We live in the Sretenka, Prosvirin Street, not far from here, number two, in the yard to the left as you go in."

"What are we to do, then, Ludmillotchka?"

"We can't do anything. Quick, throw your rings. Father's coming."

Pashka had hardly begun throwing when her father came in with the birch in his hand. He gave his daughter an angry look. So Pashka went away without having come to any arrangement. And when he went the Sunday after—the booth was shut and barred. On the signboard was: "Champion American Quoits, 40 throws 25 kopeks." A green parrot with a red tail was painted on a blue background. In his beak he held a ring, and the wind blew the yellow leaves of the lime trees past the parrot and whirled them all round the booth; the flowerbeds were over and done, not a soul was to be seen. Autumn had come.

Then Pashka remembered the gipsy's words. "An old man stands in your way . . . the knife will cause you a lot of trouble . . . the green parrot will bring you luck"—and the fury of rage he got into with the old crone passes description. He shook his fist at the parrot and went on through the dreary, yellowing gardens in a gusty wind that blew from all sides at once. He went to the Sretenka and found Prosvirin Street. It was a sombre day, grey and autumnal. Number two—there it was, green and white, with a small, poverty-stricken church opposite. Pashka entered the courtyard and turned to the left. But he had no idea where to go next. Then a street organ began to play in the middle of the yard; on it was perched a green parrot with a red tail, and it looked at Pashka out of round, unabashed and heavily lidded eyes. Then a little window opened on the second floor. A delicate little hand emerged and threw a coin wrapped in paper into the yard below. Through the double window over the padding of felt, decorated with gaily colored snippets of wool, between the curtains and the pot-plants, Pashka caught sight of Ludmilla. She looked joyfully

down at him, caressed the window with her pretty cheeks, made signs with her dainty little fingers, extended her arms, shook her head, nodded—there was no making head or tail of what she meant. Pashka too began to talk with his hands: "Come down, never mind your parents; I cannot live without you," but then a fat, moustachio'd woman in a Turkish shawl blotted Ludmilla out, shut the window with a bang and menaced Pashka with her finger.

Pashka dragged himself home, spent two weeks of torment, prowled round Prosvirin Street by night and terrified passers-by, who took him for a thief, got into desperate straits; and on the third Sunday cleaned his coat and trousers with cold tea, put on a pink tie, polished his shoes and went straight to beard the lion in his den—to offer his heart and hand. Ludmillotchka herself opened the door, gasped with astonishment and clutched at her heart; but Pashka marched straight past her into the room where her parents were drinking tea with milk after their devotions and said:

"Bon appetit and your pardon, little Father, and yours, little Mother, but I cannot live without Ludmillotchka. I was lost the moment I set eyes on her. Do as you please—here I am, master smith of the 6th class, plus bonuses, member of the union since 1917, drink no spirits, pay alimony to nobody, so there's no trouble in that way either."

"I am no little Father to you," the old man screamed in an inhuman voice, "and my wife is not your little Mother. Do you understand that?"

"And what do you mean by listening to the street organ in the yard under the windows and bursting in on strangers in their own house?" the wife added in a bass voice. "So take that. The idea! We have very different suitors in mind. Think of it, 6th class! Last year even a house-owner from Miasnitzkya spoke for Ludmilla and we turned him down. Kindly leave the house, comrade! And the girl—under lock and key is well enough. We want no smiths here, not to mention Reds."

"I make up to a thousand rubles in hard cash by the Champion Quoits alone in the season," the father put in pugnaciously, "and the prizes alone are worth four hundred rubles. Ludmillotchka

wants a husband with capital to extend the business. So—good day. Do you hear?”

“Then you won’t let me have her?” Pashka asked in a voice of despair.

“No,” the old man squealed.

“Very well,” Pashka said threateningly. “If it’s a matter of capital to extend the business, that puts the stopper on it. But you haven’t heard the last of me. I’ll lead you a dance yet. Good-bye, Ludmillotchka, hold on and—wait!”

Ludmillotchka, however, was sitting in the passage on a chest, wringing her hands.

Pashka set his teeth and went to Sucharev Market and bought himself a sharp kitchen knife. When he got home he shut himself up. Winter came and went. The ice was removed on sledges from the Fresh Ponds. Pashka went deliberately to work. Not an hour was given up to frivolity; at nights he lay low at home and his neighbors heard a subdued ringing noise proceeding from his room. Perhaps he was learning to play the guitar. No one could say. The river rose. The sun got warmer, the trees budded and put on their greenery, the rowing boats were transported on lorries to the Fresh Ponds. The photographers hung their Kremlins and moonlit nights in the walks. Of an evening the gardens were frequented by strolling couples.

Pashka went regularly Sunday by Sunday to see whether the booth was open yet. It was shut. The green parrot with a red tail sat against its blue weathered background, holding a ring in its beak, and the fresh green of the lime trees waved above it. Pashka was lean and sombre. One fine Sunday the booth was open. The gaping crowd surged round the entrance. The lights shone brightly within, the ring of metal and bursts of laughter could be heard.

Pashka shouldered his way through the crowd and stepped politely up to the counter. His eyes shone like steel above his strong cheek bones. Ludmilla was collecting the rings. No sooner had he entered than all the color left her face and she went a transparent white. Her eyes were dark and her little mouth no longer

resembled a cherry. Her father adjusted his spectacles and took a step back.

"By your leave, friends," Pashka said gruffly, shouldering a fellow aside who was throwing his rings, and without a glance at the old man he made a sign to the girl. She handed him the rings as though she were nearly fainting. He touched her cold fingers and tossed a three ruble piece down on the counter.

"You ought to have hired a cart, friend, for the samovar." There was a titter at his back.

Without turning round, Pashka took hold of the ring and flung it negligently. A brief tinkle was heard. The ring had fallen over the knife without so much as touching it. The old man scratched his nose hurriedly and uneasily put a box of Balaev sweetmeats down in front of Pashka. Pashka pushed it aside and threw his second ring as casually as he had the first. It fell just as easily and surely over the second blade. The old man scarcely had time to trot to the shelves before three more rings lightly skimmed the air and with scarcely a sound encircled three more knives. The crowd was dumb.

The old man turned his little face to Pashka and blinked. A dark drop of sweat stood out like a wart on his forehead. His trousers slipped down a little and bagged out. Pashka stood leaning elegantly on the counter with feet crossed and jingled his handful of rings.

"Well, Papa, what about Ludmillotchka now?" he asked quietly, looking aside with an air of indifference.

"I won't let you have her," her father answered in his treble pipe.

"You won't," Pashka said sleepily. "Right. Hey, you," he called out to a boy, "run to the Pokrovski gate for a cart and you shall have the samovar. Out of the way, Papa."

Pashka's face went steely. The veins stood out and branched on his brow. He braced himself and lightly raised his arm. Sparks shot from his finger tips. The knives quivered and sang under the assault of the rings. The crowd roared and raged and grew to a mob. People ran to the booth from all sides. Pashka scarcely troubled to take aim. He was frightful to look upon.

Not a ring fell into the sack. In five minutes all was over. Pashka wiped his forehead with his sleeve. The crowd made way. The cart was drawn up outside the booth.

"Load up," Pashka said.

"What do you mean to do?" the old man asked in agony, hopping from one foot to another round the shelves.

"Do? Nothing. Chuck 'em all into the pond and have done with it."

"Yes, but why, comrade?" the old fellow whimpered like a woman. "The goods alone are worth four hundred rubles, let alone the business."

"What do I care?—even if they were worth a thousand. The plunder belongs to me. I haven't stolen it. I won it honestly. The people here are my witnesses. I practised all winter and not a wink of sleep have I had. I do what I like. If I like, I keep the loot. If I don't like, I chuck it into the water."

"That's quite right," the crowd roared enthusiastically. "Take your oath on it! But not the gramophone. Don't chuck that in too."

Volunteers soon had the cart loaded to the very top.

"Off you go," Pashka commanded.

"Where are you going?" the old man blubbered. "I shan't dare show my nose at my home again after this. . . . Are you really going to sink the lot?"

"Yes," Pashka said. "Drive onto the landing stage."

"Have you no shame in the sight of God?"

"God—that's a survival of the dark ages, Papa, a painted effigy like that green parrot. But this here is—fact," and he braced his brawny arm.

The cart moved off surrounded by a living ring of cheering people and did not stop until it reached the landing stage. Pashka took the leather boots from the top of the pile and threw them into the water. The crowd gasped.

"Stop," the old man cried in a voice not his own. "Don't throw them in the water."

Pashka laid his hand on top of the loot and said quietly, lowering his eyes:

"For the last time, Papa, I speak to you frankly, as man to man. Let all here bear me witness. Give me the girl and you can have your junk and I'll never again come within a hundred yards of your booth as long as I live. But otherwise I'll blow your whole show sky-high, Papa. I cannot live a day longer without Ludmillotchka."

"Take her!" the old man squealed. "Curse you—take her!"

"Ludmillotchka," Pashka said as he left the cart. His face was pale.

She stood beside him, hiding her face in her sleeve in her embarrassment. Even her little hands were red with shame.

"The show is over, comrades. You can go," Pashka said, taking the girl by the arm as carefully as if she were made of porcelain.

The scent of lilac filled the whole gardens. Lilac was everywhere, lilac petals in the hair, lilac petals in the water. The moon, high in the dark violet-blue of the sky above the lime trees, was as sharp as a knife. And its new-born light broke in reflections on the water, melting into rings large and small, just like gold wedding rings, come to life.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Would you say this story tends to be realistic, or romantic? What details make it seem so to you? What is the central impression in this story?

2. Have you always thought that Russia is quite different from America? List the details in this story which reminded you of life in America. List those details which seemed strange. Which is the longer list?

3. To whom did Pashka propose? In what other countries must the man secure permission of the parents? What arguments can be made in defense of this practice?

4. What methods of predicting the future (other than that of reading palms) are you familiar with? Which of these seems to be the most valid? Are any of them scientific?

5. Use the dictionary for: prosily, irrevocably, pugnaciously.

FOR YOUR VOCABULARY

Pashka's money was in the form of *kopeks*, a small Russian copper coin worth about half a cent. It is the 100th part of a *ruble*.

Look up the nationality and value of each of these coins: *peso*, *pound*, *shilling*, *centime*, *real*, *franc*, *florin*, *guilder*, *mark*, *lire*, *yen*, *grivenki*.

What other names of foreign coins do you know?

SOMETHING TO DO

Russia, like South America, is a remote land whose ways we do not know too much about. In class, make a list of five or six popular notions held by some of the pupils about this country. Example: Everyone in Russia gets equal pay. Discuss these notions and try to decide whether they are true or false. If the class finds that it doesn't have the facts, each notion can be assigned to one pupil, who will look up the facts and report later to the class.

FOR FURTHER READING: BOY MEETS GIRL

Sherwood Anderson	I'm a Fool
Thomas Beer	Tact
H. C. Bunner	A Sisterly Scheme
	The Love Letters of Smith
Richard Harding Davis	Mr. Travers's First Hunt
Washington Irving	The Legend of the Three Beautiful Princesses
	The Spectre Bridegroom
O. Henry	Mammon and the Archer
	The Third Ingredient
	Transients in Arcadia
Robert Louis Stevenson	The Sire de Maletroit's Door

THE REFUGEES

Pearl S. Buck

We seldom think of China without thinking of her many millions of people and of the terrible famines that descend like a scourge on those courageous, patient multitudes. Pearl Buck has dramatized the Chinese for us in her many books about that land, the most famous of which, *The Good Earth*, earned for her the Nobel Prize for literature. In "The Refugees" we see some of the qualities that make the Chinese endure in spite of all that nature can do to destroy them.

THEY walked through the new capital, alien and from a far country, yes, although their own lands were only a few hundred miles perhaps from this very street upon which they now walked. But to them it was very far. Their eyes were the eyes of those who have been taken suddenly and by some unaccountable force from the world they have always known and always thought safe until this time. They who had been accustomed only to country roads and fields, walked now along the proud street of the new capital, their feet treading upon the new concrete sidewalk, and although the street was full of things they had never seen before, so that there were even automobiles and such things of which they had never even heard, still they looked at nothing but passed as in a dream, seeing nothing.

There were several hundred of them passing at this moment. If they did not look at anything nor at anyone, neither did any look at them. The city was full of refugees, many thousands of them, fed after a fashion, clothed somehow, sheltered in mats in great camps outside the city wall. At any hour of the day lines of ragged men and women and a few children could be seen making their way toward the camps and if any city dweller noticed them it was to think with increased bitterness,

"More refugees—will there never be an end to them? We will all starve trying to feed them even a little!"

This bitterness, which is the bitterness of fear, made small shopkeepers bawl out rudely to the many beggars who came hourly to beg at the doors, and it made men ruthless in paying small fares to the riksha pullers, of which there were ten times as many as could be used, because the refugees were trying to earn something thus. Even the usual pullers of rikshas who followed this as their profession cursed the refugees because, being starving, they would pull for anything given them, and so fares were low for all, and all suffered. With the city full of refugees, then, begging at every door, swarming into every unskilled trade and service, lying dead on the streets at every frozen dawn, why should one look at this fresh horde coming in now at twilight of a winter's day?

But these were no common men and women, no riffraff from some community always poor and easily starving in a flood time. No, these were men and women of which any nation might have been proud. It could be seen they were all from one region, for they wore garments woven out of the same dark blue cotton stuff, plain and cut in an old-fashioned way, the sleeves long and the coats long and full. The men wore smocked aprons, the smocking done in curious, intricate, beautiful designs. The women had bands of the same plain blue stuff wrapped like kerchiefs about their heads. Both men and women were tall and strong in frame, although the women's feet were bound. There were a few lads in the throng, a few children sitting in baskets slung upon a pole across the shoulders of their fathers, but there were no young girls, no young infants. Every man and every lad bore a burden on his shoulders. This burden was always bedding, quilts made of the blue cotton stuff and padded. Clothing and bedding were clean and strongly made. On top of every folded quilt with a bit of mat between was an iron caldron. These caldrons had doubtless been taken from the earthen ovens of the village when the people saw the time had come when they must move. But in no basket was there a vestige of food, nor was there a trace of food having been cooked in them recently.

This lack of food was confirmed when one looked closely into the faces of the people. In the first glance in the twilight they seemed well enough, but when one looked more closely one saw they were the faces of people starving and moving now in despair to a last hope. They saw nothing of the strange sights of a new city because they were too near death to see anything. No new sight could move their curiosity. They were men and women who had stayed by their land until starvation drove them forth. Thus they passed unseeing, silent, alien, as those who know themselves dying are alien to the living.

The last one of this long procession of silent men and women was a little weazened old man. Even he carried a load of two baskets, slung on a pole on his shoulder, the same load of a folded quilt, a caldron. But there was only one caldron. In the other basket it seemed there was but a quilt, extremely ragged and patched, but clean still. Although the load was light it was too much for the old man. It was evident that in usual times he would be beyond the age of work, and was perhaps unaccustomed to such labor in recent years. His breath whistled as he staggered along, and he strained his eyes to watch those who were ahead of him lest he be left behind, and his old wrinkled face was set in a sort of gasping agony.

Suddenly he could go no more. He set his burden down with great gentleness and sank upon the ground, his head sunk between his knees, his eyes closed, panting desperately. Starved as he was, a little blood rose in dark patches on his cheeks. A ragged vendor selling hot noodles set his stand near, and shouted his trade cry, and the light from the stand fell on the old man's drooping figure. A man passing stopped and muttered, looking at him,

"I swear I can give no more this day if I am to feed my own even nothing but noodles—but here is this old man. Well, I will give him the bit of silver I earned today against tomorrow and trust to tomorrow again. If my own old father had been alive I would have given it to him."

He fumbled in himself and brought out of his ragged girdle a bit of a silver coin, and after a moment's hesitation and muttering, he added to it a copper penny.

"There, old father," he said with a sort of bitter heartiness, "let me see you eat noodles!"

The old man lifted his head slowly. When he saw the silver he would not put out his hand. He said,

"Sir, I did not beg of you. Sir, we have good land and we have never been starving like this before, having such good land. But this year the river rose and men starve even on good land at such times. Sir, we have no seed left, even. We have eaten our seed. I told them, we cannot eat the seed. But they were young and hungry and they ate it."

"Take it," said the man, and he dropped the money into the old man's smocked apron and went on his way, sighing.

The vendor prepared his bowl of noodles and called out,

"How many will you eat, old man?"

Then was the old man stirred. He felt eagerly in his apron and when he saw the two coins there, the one copper and the other silver, he said,

"One small bowl is enough."

"Can you eat only one small bowl, then?" asked the vendor, astonished.

"It is not for me," the old man answered.

The vendor stared astonished but being a simple man he said no more but prepared the bowl and when it was finished he called out, "Here it is!" And he waited to see who would eat it.

Then the old man rose with a great effort and took the bowl between his shaking hands and he went to the other basket. There, while the vendor watched, the old man pulled aside the quilt until one could see the shrunken face of a small boy lying with his eyes fast closed. One would have said the child was dead except that when the old man lifted his head so his mouth could touch the edge of the little bowl he began to swallow feebly until the hot mixture was finished. The old man kept murmuring to him,

"There, my heart—there, my child—"

"Your grandson?" said the vendor.

"Yes," said the old man. "The son of my only son. Both my son and his wife were drowned as they worked on our land when the dykes broke."

He covered the child tenderly and then, squatting on his haunches, he ran his tongue carefully around the little bowl and removed the last trace of food. Then, as though he had been fed, he handed the bowl back to the vendor.

"But you have the silver bit!" cried the ragged vendor, yet more astonished when he saw the old man ordered no more.

The old man shook his head. "That is for seed," he replied. "As soon as I saw it, I knew I would buy seed with it. They ate up all the seed, and with what shall the land be sown again?"

"If I were not so poor myself," said the vendor, "I might even have given you a bowl. But to give something to a man who has a bit of silver—" He shook his head, puzzled.

"I do not ask you, brother," said the old man. "Well I know you cannot understand. But if you had land you would know it must be put to seed again or there will be starvation yet another year. The best I can do for this grandson of mine is to buy a little seed for the land—yes, even though I die, and others must plant it, the land must be put to seed."

He took up his load again, his old legs trembling, and straining his eyes down the long straight street he staggered on.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. What single impression of the Chinese does this story convey?
2. What attitude of some Chinese toward the land is shown by the old man's use of the money? What attitude toward the family? Toward oneself?
3. Why was the city not more hospitable to the refugees? Cite instances from American life of unfriendly attitudes toward certain groups. What truth about human nature does such conduct reveal?
4. Why did the stranger feel obligated to give the old man the money? What other people show this same reverence for the aged? To what extent do we have it in America?

FOR YOUR VOCABULARY

In "The Refugees" people were carried around the city in *rikshas*, sometimes called *jirikshas*. Here is a list of not-so-common means of conveyance, some in use in various parts of the world, some no longer in use except in movies of the past. Look them up and tell

what country or what historical period they belong to: *tram, charabanc, palanquin, perambulator, prairie schooner, sedan chair, sledge, hansom.*

SOMETHING TO DO

1. Relate to the class the most inspiring example you know of a person's sacrificing his own interests for the good of the group.

2. Mrs. Buck's Chinese refugees felt *alien* even among other Chinese. Invent, for the germ of a future story, a situation in which you would feel alien among fellow Americans.

FOR FURTHER READING

Nobel Prize winners do not come to your attention every day. Pearl Buck is one of three American authors who have received the Nobel Prize (Pearl Buck, Sinclair Lewis, Eugene O'Neill). If you wish to read further in her work, you will find her stories in the volume, *The First Wife and Other Stories* (1933). Try "Wang Lung" (he is the hero of the novel, *The Good Earth*), or the other stories of flood, "Barren Spring," "Fathers and Mothers," and "The Good River." "The Frill" is a real masterpiece. Two thrilling recent stories are "The Enemy" and "A Man's Foes." Or you might try one of the novels: *The Good Earth* (1931), or *Sons* (1932), or *Dragon Seed* (1943). From Pearl Buck's work you will learn much about China, and more about human beings.

A NAME AND A FLAG

John W. Thomason, Jr.

In the story which follows, the writer, a distinguished soldier from Texas, contributes to our historical background by taking us behind the lines of the Army of Northern Virginia just a few months before the surrender of Lee at Appomattox, which closed the War between the States. In the story you will find many indications that in December of 1864 the tide of war was running heavily against the Confederates; you will learn something of several important historical personages, among them Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States; and you will gain an understanding of the importance of the organization of the Confederate Army, based on the old state militias and fostering fierce pride in unit and in leader. Above all, this story should bring to you a better understanding of the spirit of state loyalty which still marks the typical Texan. Texas is the only one of the United States which existed as an independent nation before joining the Union; perhaps this is why Texans have a love for their state which the citizens of other states can rarely match.

The story opens in a leisurely manner, giving the details of the situation. You must read the sixth and seventh paragraphs very carefully, or you will fail to understand why the Texans were so disturbed over the "rumor of impending anonymity."

It is one of the last stories they tell of Praxiteles Swan, and of the Texas Brigade in the Army of Northern Virginia—how he went with Major Howdy Martin to beard Mr. Jefferson Davis in his private cabinet over a matter that was important to them, in the last dark winter of the Confederate war. If you are diligent in business, Praxiteles used to remark, you stand before kings; you do not stand before mean men. And Jefferson Davis was as near a king as the Confederacy could afford.

Praxiteles used to comment, when the old folks talked of the war and why we lost it, that he felt Jeff Davis did the best he could—as well as anybody, and better than most. Certainly, on the one occasion he, Praxiteles, had reason to confer with the President, Mr. Davis was remarkably sensible in his judgments.

For it fell out, a little before Christmastime of '64, that a rumor not of Yankee issue came to vex the shrunken gray regiments that stood between Grant and Richmond. Longstreet's Corps held the north side of the James; A. P. Hill covered Petersburg, and the Second Corps was distributed, some with Gordon in the lines, others toward the Valley under Jubal Early.

There were many indications that the war was running down, but the men in the miserable, sodden trenches and in the bleak hutments behind them took very little interest in such matters. They were preoccupied with professional military details and with the problem of keeping alive. They maintained a desultory bickering with equally uncomfortable blue formations over against them, and foraged desperately to supplement their slender rations, and remained tough-minded and generally cheerful throughout. Let the politicians worry about the rest of it, was their word.

An astonishingly large number of private letters from the front, that last bleak winter, shine with a persistent hopefulness; indicate, also, oyster roasts and occasional turkeys. They did not starve and they did not despair. The Yankee excursions in the West, deep thinkers among them asserted, had overextended the Federal resources. Come spring, they'd better look to themselves! It is always that way in war; the people at the point of contact take the most cheerful view. The people behind the lines are the first to cry havoc and the first to cry for peace. Of course, there were desertions—an appalling number of desertions. Some pretty good men were quitting, and the folks back home—even the preachers and the women—appeared to have the blues. But on the line, the word the Texas troops were really grieved to hear dealt with a projected reorganization of the army.

The basis of the Provisional Army of the Confederate States was the old militia structure. From this came most of the volun-

teer regiments and brigades which fought the opening actions. The orders of battle about the time of First Manassas listed brigades and divisions by number, and regiments after their state designations. But the Confederate soldier was an individual, distrustful of anything that smacked of regimentation, jealous and ardent for his sectional ties, and peculiarly susceptible to leadership. Thus, by the end of 1861, brigades were generally known by the names of their brigadiers and their states; and divisions, then and afterward, were named for their generals; and this applied even to corps. The names of their armies were officially regional. The Confederate service was a personal service. The First Virginia Brigade, for instance, glorious at First Manassas and on other fields, was never anything but the Stonewall Brigade. There were Benning's Georgians and Law's Alabamians; and Pickett's Division was so designated; and the First Corps was Longstreet's Corps, and your old men always said, "Lee's Army." After the formation of the permanent Confederate government and the adoption of a consistent military policy, in 1862, with conscription as its leading feature, the Provisional Army created very few new regiments or brigades. Late volunteers and conscripts alike went into existing formations, and this was the principal source of Confederate excellence in battle. Each regiment of soldiers had a solid core of veterans, with traditions and *esprit* to match. The pride they had in themselves was something fierce and alive, unflagging to the end.

But as the old stock was ground away between the millstones of war, and as the replacement material in the depots dwindled and failed, the numbers and strengths in the units under arms faded also. Regiments, that bleak winter of '64, fell to one hundred men or so—three or four hundred rifles made an unusually strong brigade. A division order of battle might, and usually did, list five brigades, yet muster no more in actual fighting strength than two Northern regiments. Operations officers and clerks alike made moan, and the War Department, dreamily pondering academic details, busied itself with the drafting of an order that would abolish at once the annoying sectional and personal desig-

nations, do away with these high-stomached corporals' guards masquerading as combat units, and regroup officers and men into actual, rather than skeleton, organizations.

It was the rumor of this impending anonymity which struck fire in the camps of the four-hundred-odd veterans of Hood's old Texas Brigade. They had every proper sentiment of respect and affection for their companions in arms out of Virginia, the Carolinas, Tennessee and the Gulf States. But Texas was something else again. Officers and men took counsel together over a score of smoky campfires, and determined on measures. They would make a protest. It was felt that their spokesmen should be persons of loud voice and imposing presence, worthy of the brigade in bearing as well as in combat background. It was felt that they should have enough rank to brush aside slick young aides-de-camp and doorkeepers, yet not enough seniority to make them timid before higher authority. It was decided, in brief, that Maj. Howdy Martin and Capt. Praxiteles Swan, veterans of every battle from Elthan's Landing to the Darbytown Road, both of them humble before God and brash in every other relation, were ideal representatives. The two officers said they'd take the job. They made ready to go to Richmond and present the matter to the Secretary of War, and, if necessary, to the President.

The old men who told this tale a lifetime afterward still chuckled when they described the grooming and titivating which the major and the Elder underwent for the occasion. Uniforms had become mighty shabby on the Northside lines, and the Richmond merchants had no stocks to replenish a man's outfit. Howdy Martin went unabashed in a skin-tight pair of Yankee-blue trousers, taken from a miraculous Yankee quartermaster who had been in life almost as big as the major. Some large officer loaned a uniform coat which, after a little stretching at the shoulder seams, would serve. It was simple to sew a major's star on the collar, and Howdy's winter beard made a shirt quite unnecessary. His boots were a difficulty; they were cracked and broken, so that his toes showed, but nothing could be done about boots, and his feet were too big for any Yankee's they captured—a fact regretfully conceded and accepted—although the pickets went out after dark two

nights and brought in specimens. His hat, a slant-brimmed Kilpatrick, was on the small side, but his brass-mounted dragoon revolvers, one on each hip, and his long cavalry saber were sufficiently imposing; and once a man saw his adventurous nose jutting from his great beard, and his bright hard eyes, deep-set under bushy brows, and the whole confident frontier strut of the man, the details didn't matter.

Praxiteles, who wore a good coat all his life, and good boots, was in better case, but not much better. The crude darning showed painfully over his right hip and inside his right sleeve, where his pistol holster had worn away the cloth, and low on his left hip where saber slings had chafed. His breeches were frankly patched at knee and seat; good, weather-tight patches, but unsightly. However, his leather and his weapons were fine and bright, and you had to look close to see that his beaver was broken about the crown. Somebody loaned him a clean paper collar, and, as regimental officers went in that army, he considered himself well turned out. Secretly, he conceded that this was important to him. Old Howdy didn't care, but Praxiteles Swan cared, and made himself as smart as he could in any company.

The brigade commander, who was the senior colonel—John Gregg, dead on the Darbytown Road, not having been replaced, and never would be—said, dubiously, he reckoned they could go, and sent them on to division headquarters. Major General Field, a meticulous administrator, disapproved, but forwarded the request to Longstreet at First Corps.

Longstreet, the old regular, said, "No, not by a damn sight." No officer or man from his corps was going to a higher echelon with a complaint against orders, actual or impending. Orders were orders, he told them severely. The Articles of War were explicit on the circulation of petitions. Such procedures smacked of mutiny. Longstreet could be mighty severe on subjects like that.

But Longstreet knew his Texans, and he had not forgotten how meanly his couriers were treated by the Richmond war lords; the chosen valiant men in whose hands he sent the captured battle flags of Chickamauga to the President, after that hard battle. The story was, not even an adjutant met them at the depot;

Winder's military police harassed them; the Yankee standards were carried through the streets of the capital in a dray, behind a Negro and a mule, and slung into the corner of an office. The War Department found no time for Longstreet's orphans at all. This the general considered briefly, then held up a hand to check the outburst he saw gathering in Praxiteles Swan's angry eye and behind Major Howdy Martin's purpled face.

"Of course," he added, "if you two gentlemen wish a brief season of refreshment in Richmond after labor—why, the front's right quiet now. Your services are very well known to me. Why don't you take a little furlough in town? And if you should chance to meet Mr. Secretary of War—whoever he is at the moment—in the Ballard House bar, or encounter Mr. President Davis in a social way—why, any Southern officer has the right to state his private views in any company. And if you choose to discuss professional matters, your blood be on your own shirt fronts! . . . Colonel Latrobe, see about their passes, and before they go out into this weather, remember, colonel, it's confoundedly cold."

There was a warm humanity about old Longstreet, Praxiteles always said. They mounted their horses and rode some miles to Richmond, in time for a latish dinner, for which Howdy Martin paid with a hundred-dollar Confederate bill, and gave the waiter the change. Money was mighty low, the more you had, the less it seemed to be worth. Their coattail pockets were full of it.

Encouraged by what Howdy Martin described as ample vittles, they discussed ways and means. They could go to the office of the adviser to the President, General Bragg, but they didn't like what they knew of Bragg; no nourishment there, Praxiteles thought. They could go to the adjutant general, Cooper, but he was a terrible fellow for orders, everybody said. And the Secretary of War, of course. But the President was over them all; and when you came right down to it, he ran the army. Everybody knew that.

"Why bother with the spoon vittles?" asked Howdy Martin. "Elder, let's go right for the meat. Minnows air safe; we air out after whales!"

Praxiteles agreed that this was horse sense. They walked the

few blocks to the gloomy house where the President had his offices. The streets were empty, and the December sky was low and dark. Nobody was outside who didn't have to be. It was coming on to sleet, and the short winter day was drawing in. At the Confederate White House, the sentry, tramping the sidewalk briskly to avoid freezing on his beat, kept his hands in his armpits and his piece under his arm; a length of old shawl was tied around his ears and his wrists were blue with cold.

He started to unjoint himself for ceremony, but Praxiteles stopped him, "Ne' mind, son. We'll just go in."

A mournful Negro doorman in white gloves and a swallowtail admitted them. A smart young staff officer, passing through the hall, raised his brows at them and would have let it go at that, but they loomed enormous in the dim light and their eyes held him.

"Well, gentlemen? . . . Major Martin? Captain Swan? Texas Brigade? Oh, yes, those Cotton States fellows. . . . See the President? See Mr. Jefferson Davis? You have—haven't an appointment?" The staff officer said he'd never heard of such a thing. He leaned against the wall, shaken. He managed to convey that Mr. Jefferson Davis was mighty busy—a mighty busy man these days. Only saw folks by appointment.

"He'll see us," said Howdy Martin. "We've come in from Northside in all this weather—"

"We're grieved to discommode him," began Praxiteles Swan, "but there's a little matter—" His voice began to rise.

"Whar's his room?" demanded Howdy Martin, at his battle pitch.

The officer was visibly distressed. "Not so loud, please, gentlemen! I'll speak to Colonel—"

"You'll speak to nobody! Whar's his room?"

"If you'll just be patient, gentlemen! I'll arrange— Here; this way."

He led them upstairs to the second floor. There was a hall, and chairs and sofas along it; men in fine civilian broadcloth, with papers in green-baize bags, and neat men in uniform, half a dozen or so, occupied the seats. They eyed the two rough soldiers with distaste. The young aide slipped away. The Texans looked at

each other. Which door, Howdy insisted, but there were four doors, and all of them closed.

Praxiteles Swan took thought, and his temper abated. He had waited in the anterooms of the great, in that other existence of his, more than Major Howdy Martin had waited.

"No sense," he said reasonably, "in bulling into this. I reckon Mr. Davis has a lot on his mind. We can wait a spell."

"Don't want to wait," said Howdy. "I'm riled up now. I cain express myself now the way the boys would like me to. Did I sit here in this crib, an' all these nice folks around with little shoes on their feet an' clean paper collars—why, Elder, the strength will go right out of me. I tell you, I'm—"

A door opened—the door facing them. A medium-sized general with a bluish, bilious face, bushy eyebrows and bad-tempered dark eyes came out, stuffing papers into his pockets. He looked at them without seeing them or the other people who got to their feet for him.

"General Bragg," said Praxiteles. "Saw him after Chickamauga."

Howdy Martin, his saber clanking loudly, was across the hall in three long strides, and through the door. Praxiteles followed him, as duty bound, but he didn't like it. He didn't like it. There was this matter of the fitness of things. He closed the door gently behind him.

There were three men around a desk. Lamps bathed the room in yellow light. Already the day was gone outside the windows. Behind the desk, erect, slender, and with a dignity that made you forget his medium stature—he could have stood up straight under Praxiteles' arm—Mr. Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States, looked coldly upon these intruders. A dapper civilian—that would be Burton Harrison—straightened up from some papers and gave them quizzical regard, his head tilted to one side. A tall officer with the yellow collar and cuffs of the cavalry, a handsome, bearded man with a bearing hauntingly familiar, took a step toward them.

Praxiteles Swan, watching the President's austere, high-nosed face, tried to recall a thing remembered from long ago.

Spring of 1861. The sandy road through the pines and the sweet

gums from Huntsville to Montgomery. Riding down that road to join the war—riding with old Gen. Sam Houston. And the general saying, in that blunt voice of his, "I'll tell you about Jeff Davis. Cold-blooded as a lizard, proud as Lucifer—what he touches will not prosper."

Sam Houston knew his man. The war wasn't prospering; the maps on the desk were maps of Wilmington, last open port of the Confederacy, of Cape Fear River and Fort Fisher. But, Praxiteles conceded, this man was not defeated. There were plenty of officials in high places who were beaten now. But not Mr. Jefferson Davis. The man was tempered steel, whether you admired his judgment or not. You could kill such people; you couldn't defeat them. Months afterward, when Praxiteles heard that Davis had been captured in flight, he needed nobody to tell him that Davis was going West in the hope that he would find enough men of his own hard fiber to keep on fighting.

All this went through Praxiteles' head while Mr. Davis spoke. His voice was thin and keen, and cold as the wind outside. "Officers having business here are usually announced," he informed them. "To what urgency do I owe this honor?"

The timbre of the voice raised the hackles on Praxiteles' neck.

Howdy Martin planted his feet, squared his great shoulders and inflated his chest. "Mr. President, I'll make myself known. I'm Major Martin, of Hood's Texas Brigade. This here is Elder—Captain Swan, of that same command. Mr. President, I'll make a long story short, as the fellow says. The boys out on the North-side, in the lines, hev been told a tale that they don't understand. They hev heard tell of something that bothers them. Mr. President, they hev kind of deputized me an' the Elder—captain, there—me not bein' a man of smooth speech, as the Good Book puts it—to come in here and find out about it."

A faint shadow of expression, gone as quickly as it showed, flicked across the President's face. Behind his icy front, he had a certain feeling for combat soldiers—wanted, he said always, to serve in the field himself.

"What is it, major," he inquired, "that has thus upset my Texans? If it is properly a matter for my attention—"

"Mr. President, I'll tell you. If it ain't for your attention. I

don't know whose attention it's for. They tell us, seh, in ouah camp, that the War Department is gettin' ready to issue an order to take away our state names—to break us up and mix us around, and to number us, by regiments an' brigades an' divisions, like any bunch of conscripts brought in by a posse!

"Mr. President, the Texas Brigade come up here in the summer of 1861! Right after Manassas! We popped our first caps at Elthan's Landing! We was the boys that broke the line at Gaines's Mill. Second Manassas, Mr President!" The windows rattled and the lamps flickered. "Sharpsburg! . . . You slick civilian there, did you ever hear tell of the cornfield at Sharpsburg? Fredericksburg! Gettysburg! Chickamauga! The Wilderness! An' Spottsylvania! Cold Harbor! An' the Darbytown Road! I tell you, Mr. President, we have left our dead on every field this army has fought, from the James River up into Pennsylvania an' as far west as North Georgia! And outside of a few boys who straggled too far forward at Gettysburg, we have buried our dead ourselves!" This was important to soldiers; it meant you held your ground. "We have our battle flags that our women gave us! Mr. President"—he was terribly passionate—"they air Texas flags! Texas ladies made them! Texas boys have fought under them! Those names I named you, they air on those flags! Will you take 'em away from us an' give us a number in place of them? And a number in place of our Texas name?

"Mr. President, we Texicans have obeyed orders. We aim to keep on fighting while the war lasts. But, Mr. President, we air the Texas Brigade, an' so we will remain."

He stopped talking and the silence fairly thundered. Then Praxiteles added mildly, "That's what the boys wanted you to know, Mr. President. Our minds air made up." It was like the still small voice after the hurricane.

Jefferson Davis was moved—only his aides knew how much. He was not a man who showed emotion.

Now he said, "Major Martin. Captain Swan. The details of army administration would not interest you. It is your good fortune, sirs, that you need take the soldier's view only. But you may return to your men out there, and tell them for me: So long as

there are enough of them alive to carry their state colors, they will be known as Texans, of the Texas regiments, of Hood's Texas Brigade.

"Now, Major Martin, Captain Swan, it has been a pleasure to receive you here. But I am not master of my own time." He took their hands, first the major's, then the captain's. He bowed formally; his hand was thin and cold, with a nervous strength. And the tall cavalry general, who said his name was Custis Lee, showed them to the door.

The two, in the sleety night, found nothing to say to each other. They thought they might as well go on back to the command. They got their horses from the livery stable. The sleet had changed to a wet snow, driven on a bitter wind. The widely spaced street lights were blanketed, and made luminous yellow spheres of radiance that gave no light at all. The horses' hoofs were muffled on the road. They seemed, to themselves, riding with their heads bent against the wind, the last lonely souls in a world of cold and sleep. They came to a crossroads where all directions looked the same.

"Which road, Elder, which road?" asked Major Martin impatiently. "I'm kind of turned around."

Praxiteles lifted his beard from his chest and answered out of a dark dream, "Either road will take us where we're going. It don't matter now. Same distance and no choice."

Off to the west and south, the rain was falling through the naked boughs of tall trees that stood gaunt around a place called Appomattox.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Explain clearly the basis upon which the Army of the Confederate States was originally organized. How had the soldiers themselves further emphasized this regional organization? Why was it important to the soldiers?

2. Why are modern armies not organized on this regional basis?

3. What does the author mean by saying, "But Texas was something else again"? What single impression is created? What did you learn about Texas character from this story?

4. State clearly what details the story gives you of the condition of

equipment in the Confederate Army in December, 1864. What does the story say about Confederate money?

5. What did you learn about Jefferson Davis, General Longstreet, General Sam Houston?

6. How does the story bring out the differences between civilians and soldiers? Between combat soldiers and soldiers in office jobs?

7. What is the significance of Praxiteles' last remark? What is the significance of the very last sentence in the story?

8. What does the dialect add to the story? What words, if any, did you find hard to figure out?

9. Use the dictionary for: desultory, foraged, havoc, conscription, brigade, anonymity, brash, titivating, dubiously, meticulous, echelon, abated, quizzical, timbre.

FOR YOUR VOCABULARY

Mr. Thomason says that "the orders of battle . . . listed *brigades* and *divisions* by number, and *regiments* after their state designations." The names of the various units of military organization and their officers can be a valuable part of your vocabulary.

A brigade is the normal command of a *brigadier general*; a division is the normal command of a *major general*. Make a list of all ranks in the United States Army from second lieutenant to "General of the Armies of the United States," a title which has been held only by General Pershing. Also make a list of non-commissioned ranks. (Ask your librarian for a book containing the desired information.)

Make a similar list of ranks for the United States Navy. What army rank is comparable to that of navy captain? What navy rank is comparable to that of army captain?

How are officers in the Marines designated?

SOMETHING TO DO

"A Name and a Flag" can be especially effective as a radio play. Let the class prepare a dramatized radio version. The whole group should block out the scenes that seem to be required. If there are five scenes, the responsibility for writing them out will make five assignments. The scene in which Martin and Swan are dressing for their trip should of course be put into dialogue. The part containing the climax can be copied directly from the story. The announcer's part will make a sixth assignment: to explain the situation and its importance to the Texans. Each assignment should be worked out by

a given number of pupils; then the class should select the best version of each scene. Finally, the completed radio play should be presented in class.

FOR FURTHER READING: THE CIVIL WAR IN FICTION

The Civil War as a subject for short stories and novels has powerfully attracted writers of fiction. The author of "A Name and a Flag" has a volume of short stories about Praxiteles Swan, a Methodist preacher in the Army of Northern Virginia, entitled *Lone Star Preacher*. There is a book of stories by Elsie Singmaster about the greatest battle of the war, entitled *Gettysburg*. Then there are four Stephen Crane stories about the Civil War in a volume of Crane stories published in 1940, *Twenty Stories* (Knopf).

But the novels of the Civil War are much more numerous than the short stories. Here are some of the best of them:

James Boyd	Marching On
Winston Churchill	The Crisis
Stephen Crane	The Red Badge of Courage
Clifford Dowdy	Bugles Blow No More
Ellen Glasgow	The Battleground
Caroline Gordon	None Shall Look Back
Mary Johnston	The Long Roll
MacKinlay Kantor	Long Remember
Margaret Mitchell	Gone with the Wind
James H. Street	Tap Roots
T. S. Stribling	The Forge
Stark Young	So Red the Rose

CO-PILOTS DON'T TALK BACK

Leland Jamieson

Ten or fifteen years ago it was an entertaining hobby to keep informed on the literature of aviation, and to read every story of pilots and airplanes as it appeared. But the literature of flying has now become so vast that, even if you made it your profession, you could hardly read every aviation book and story that is published. Furthermore, aviation has made such strides that most of the earlier writing now seems antiquated. But the best of it still survives; and this best includes the work of Leland Jamieson.

Like most aviation stories, "Co-Pilots Don't Talk Back" contains a number of technical flying terms. But even if no one can explain these to you, it doesn't matter much; you can still get the plot, understand the struggle, and appreciate the character problems in the story. Johnny Vare is being put through a test; before it is over, he has some exciting adventures, and you learn a good deal about him and about Captain Bo Streeter.

DIVISION MANAGER BARLOW leaned back in his chair and made a pyramid of his fingers in front of pursed, thoughtful lips. Across the blue water of Biscayne Bay the Nassau Express dipped down and touched, its wake a white-penciled line that slowly curled back toward the Base as the engines flared in a low growl muffled by distance. Division Manager Barlow brought his mind back to the problem that had worried him and his two senior pilots all afternoon. This business of releasing surplus co-pilots at the end of a winter's season was tough on everyone. You never knew if you were keeping the right men.

"Well," Barlow said to Captain Sam Carson, Inter-American Airways' retiring chief pilot, "you feel sure, then, that Harley and Gibbs should be released and not re-employed. What about Vare?"

Captain Carson took a deep drag on his cigarette and crunched it out. He glanced at Captain Bo Streeter, sitting beside him. He said to Barlow, "I can't make up my mind about Vare. There's something about him I like. I wish I could take him down through the Islands the way we'd planned. After ten days with him, I ought to be able to tell you."

Barlow watched the Express taxiing toward its float at the dock. He was thinking, "If there were only some way of predicting what a pilot would do in various types of emergencies—" For ten years he had been trying to remove the human element from aviation, and he knew it couldn't be done.

He looked back at Sam Carson. "Usually you can tell about a co-pilot without all this hemming and hawing. What's the matter with Vare? If he can't fly, let's fire him."

Carson shook his big, shaggy head. "It's not his flying I'm afraid of. It's his reaction to things—his attitude."

"What about his attitude?" Barlow asked crisply. This was important. Every co-pilot was expected to become a captain, someday.

"Well," Carson said hesitantly, "I don't like to give any man a black eye, but Vare's had some experience as a first pilot down in South America, or someplace, and—well, you know how hard it is for a man to step down from command, once he's had it."

"You mean he's insubordinate?" Barlow demanded.

"Not exactly." Carson searched for the word. "I'm afraid he's just the wrong sort of pilot for Inter-American. But I wouldn't want to say, definitely, until I've had more chance to fly with him."

"You won't get that," Barlow said. "You're leaving for Baltimore tonight. But Bo's taking your place, and he can fly with Vare. You'd better tell Bo something about him."

Carson looked over at Bo Streeter. He grinned with a faint derision. "If I were a psychologist like you, Bo," he said, "I'd know about Vare. All I can figure is he's hotheaded, and he's a little on the big-mouth, wisecracking, smart-aleck side—and yet with all that, he's really a pretty nice sort of guy."

Division Manager Barlow said to Bo Streeter, "Have you flown with Vare at all?"

"No," Streeter said. "I've only seen him around. But from the way Sam describes him, it ought not to take me ten days in the Islands to make up my mind."

Carson insisted quietly, "Don't jump to conclusions, Bo. I understand Vare's had some hard luck. We've got to be right about him, but we ought to take time to be fair. I've got a hunch the man's scared."

"Of what?" Bo Streeter demanded. "You?"

"No. Of losing his job. I think maybe this touchiness and smart-aleck belligerence is just an unconscious defense. But I'm not sure. Maybe he can't make the grade."

"Well," Barlow said, "we'll find out. Bo, you take the trip tomorrow that Sam was scheduled for. You take Vare down through the Islands for ten days and you'll know. Whatever your recommendation is, it'll be final."

Sam Carson ran his hand through his thick hair. He met Bo Streeter's eyes levelly. "I tell you one thing, Bo," he said, "Vare's a nice guy, but if you heckle him he'll blow up. He's trying to make the grade, and I'm really afraid he can't do it. But there's no use to be tough on him."

"If he can't take a little razzing," Bo Streeter said, "what's he going to do when he's got to get out of a jam under pressure? That's the first thing I'm going to find out."

Division Manager Barlow said nothing. He made a faint line through John H. Vare's name on the surplus co-pilot list.

At 6:28 the next morning, First Officer Johnny Vare parked his car in the employees' lot at the Inter-American Airways Base on Biscayne Bay. Laden with his accouterments, his bag, and his brief case filled with his flight manual and harbor charts and navigational charts and instruments, he followed the curve of the sidewalk toward the terminal building, swinging easily along, a tall, lean-faced, dark-haired man with a wide, determined mouth. It was a windy dark morning; a rain squall was marching in across the bay, graying the chopped froth of the whitecaps. Johnny Vare breathed deeply of the smell of salt, feeling the perennial excitement he always felt when he was about to go out on his run.

But he was excited this morning for another reason too. This trip was his check ride with Captain Sam Carson, whose recommendation would either carry him into a permanent job, and finally a captaincy, or toss him back into the limbo that swallowed so many pilots who never were lucky enough to get on with the air lines, or who, when they got on, weren't good enough to remain.

Johnny Vare was resolutely determined that he was going to be good enough.

He paused by the fence for a minute, caught up in fascination by the display of orderly industry all around him. The ramp crew was lowering a big seaplane down its incline into the water; two tractors were chattering at two other mammoth ships—immensely tall ships, on their beaching gears—to get them into position for launching; taxis were stopping at the building entrance to disgorge passengers en route to Cuba, Mexico, the West Indies, South America.

Johnny Vare watched, filled with an inspiring pride that he was a part of all this. But he wished, as he strode through the waiting room, past the ticket windows and the customs rooms and down the long corridor to the flight-section office, that he could be like the other probationary first officers. They were just kids, really, out of Pensacola last year; and they accepted everything without questions, too timid and dazzled even to think except in their disciplined grooves.

Johnny Vare wasn't a kid just out of Pensacola. He was thirty-two, and the only flying school he had ever attended was the school of experience. He had six thousand hours as a first pilot himself, piled up on the jungle runs that crisscrossed Central America, where you didn't last long if you wouldn't fight for your rights at the drop of a hat, and if you couldn't think and act fast in emergencies. He would have been down there yet, if fever and dysentery hadn't half killed him. But they had, and so here he was back in the States, trying to start over again.

It was tough, trying to start over, when you were thirty-two and had six thousand hours. You found yourself, anomalously, handicapped by experience. You were too old, and you had learned to think and fly in your own individual way, which wasn't, necessarily,

the way the lines wished you to do. So the brass hats didn't want to waste time on you, when they could get younger, more plastic co-pilots. One by one, futilely, Johnny had canvassed all possibilities.

He had been on the verge of returning to his old job at Puerto Barrios—although the doctors had told him the same diseases would hit him again if he did, and this time probably kill him—when Inter-American Airways, temporarily short of first officers, had offered him a six months' trial on the line.

When he walked into the section room now, where the flight crews always checked in for a study of weather maps and winds aloft and other data pertinent to their trips, he didn't see Captain Carson. Captain Bo Streeter, a short, bulky man with a square face and gray eyes as hard as steel drills, was standing at the section manager's desk, assembling charts he had pulled from his brief case.

"Good morning, sir," Johnny said. "Has Captain Carson been in?"

Captain Streeter pulled back his uniform cuff and looked at his watch. "You're two minutes late," he said in his dry, precise voice.

Johnny grinned, feeling thankful Bo Streeter wasn't taking him on this check ride. Streeter was an ex-Naval officer with an unbending severity and a penchant for appraising his flying mates on a basis of psychological analysis. As soon as he took off in Miami, or even before that, he started setting psychological traps to determine the caliber of his crew. He insisted on knowing, he said, so he would know what to expect of his men in emergencies. And before his ship floated up to the dock on its return, invariably Bo Streeter knew.

But that didn't worry Johnny Vare now; he was going out with Captain Sam Carson. It was just like Streeter to pick up something like this, when it was none of his business.

Impulsively, making a joke of it, Johnny said, "You can just take the two minutes out of my pay."

Bo Streeter's face didn't change, but his gray eyes grew smaller. "Maybe that's an idea," he said evenly. "Carson left for Balti-

more yesterday. I'm the new division chief pilot. This check ride's with me." He smiled without humor. "Or didn't you know?"

Consternation struck Johnny Vare in a wave. For a moment he stood there, frozen, silently cursing himself as a fool. Ever since he could remember, he had talked too much; he had always made wisecracks that got him in trouble.

"You?" he heard his voice say inanely.

"That's right," Bo Streeter said, and smiled in a bland, impersonal way. His voice grew crusty. "And now, if you'll close that big mouth and pull your eyes back into your face, you might check the gas and figure your c g. and go on taking care of your job—as long as you've got one."

"Yes, sir," Johnny Vare said, and swallowed, and then moved in a daze out to his ship at its float, where he climbed up on the wing and began to measure the gas in the tanks.

Biscayne Bay was a wind-whipped sheet of lead when, at exactly 7:30, with fourteen passengers aboard and the engines idling as Captain Streeter sat impatiently in the cockpit, Johnny thrust his head up through the open bow hatch and waited for the blast of the beaching-crew chief's whistle. On the float, two members of the crew dragged back the gangplank, the steward closed the cabin hatch, and the chief's whistle shrilled. Simultaneously, Streeter revved up his engines and motioned to Johnny to cast off the bow line. The big bimotored seaplane moved away from the float toward the channel. Johnny folded his bow post, closed the hatch and wormed his way through the companionway to his seat in the cockpit.

He had only time to fasten his safety belt before Streeter said in an impassive voice, "Okay, since this is a check, let's see how you take off in a chop."

"Yes, sir," Johnny said, and took the controls, trying to be calm and appear self-assured.

"You'll make all the take-offs and landings, this trip," Streeter said. Then he added in a dry, stinging tone, "Unless I have to make 'em myself, to keep you from cracking me up."

"Yes, sir," Johnny said

He tried, by intense concentration, to remove Streeter to an utterly impersonal status. But he couldn't; he felt too upset. He had to fly the way Streeter said fly, and do every job right the first time. He had to.

But the trouble was, he had never taken a seaplane off in a chop anything like as heavy as this one. He had never landed in anything really rough. All the captains he had flown with, when the going had been tough, had made their landings and take-offs themselves. His six thousand hours of varied and sometimes dangerous land-plane experience wasn't much help to him now.

So of course he was going to make a lot of mistakes on this trip, and the knowledge filled him with a dull sort of frenzy. The little tricks, the nuances of a finished technique, were developed only by practice—and he'd had no chance to practice. Bo Streeter knew that. He wished suddenly that he could get Streeter into a Ford loaded with four thousand pounds of mining machinery, and make him try to take off from a pocket-handkerchief field in the Sierra de las Minas of Guatemala. He'd make Streeter—

Through the rain-blurred windshield he saw a buoy dead ahead, and gunned the left engine and kicked rudder just in time to swing out and avoid hitting it. He'd better stop thinking of Streeter; he'd better get his mind on his job.

They roared out across the bay, ricocheting from crest to crest, taking quick, hard shocks that had a resonant, tinny sound. And finally, with a gonglike detonation, the hull sliced through the last wave as the wing lifted it clear. Johnny trimmed the ship for the climb, feeling better. If he could do this well each time, he might have a chance

At one thousand feet under a glowering overcast he set his course toward Antilla, Cuba, bucking a rough cross headwind. Through the rain he caught a glimpse of Fowey Rocks, but after that there was nothing but churning open sea. The automatic pilot was flying the plane now, so there was nothing to do but sit there and keep the carburetor heat steady at ninety degrees, the props synchronized, the heading corrected for drift and the gyro's precession.

They crossed the Florida Straits. At eight o'clock Bo Streeter

conferred for a moment with young Sayre, the radio operator; and Sayre, using the goniometer, got a line of position from two shore radio stations—there being no land in sight, and no sun visible, and dead reckoning being unreliable in this changing wind—and gave it to Miami on regular sequence.

"Correct your course four degrees east," Streeter said tersely. "This wind's picking up."

Johnny corrected his course. He crossed Hurricane Flats; he could tell, by the changing shade of the water. But he didn't glimpse Andros, through the rain; he didn't glimpse anything. Two hours dragged into three. Streeter sat in outward disinterested silence, but he saw every move Johnny made.

So at last they picked up the Cuban coast at Port Padre, and skirted inland, climbing over the hills. At 10:50, late because of that wind, they circled the dock at Antilla. Sayre got the wind and passed that information to Streeter on a radio form. Johnny sighted the buoy, and came in, keeping fifteen inches of manifold pressure.

The bay was not very rough, but rough enough to make a slow landing desirable. Johnny flattened his glide, pulling the speed down to seventy knots, then sixty-eight, leveling off.

"You're low!" Streeter barked. "Don't burn her on, in this sea!"

Johnny tried to divide his attention between flying the ship and hearing Streeter's further instructions. And in a moment of hesitancy, he let the ship stall and fall in.

It wasn't really a bad landing, but it wasn't a good one. The hull struck with a metallic bang, and stayed there. Johnny had been through worse landings that captains had made.

But instantly Bo Streeter exclaimed scathingly. "Haven't you got eyes? You were high! You dropped her half a mile! Call the steward and see if the passengers still have their teeth!"

Johnny flared stubbornly, compelled to defend himself, "You said I was low! You said not to burn her on!"

Streeter's eyes grew small and black. "When you're flying the ship, you're supposed to think! I suppose if I told you to spin us in, you'd go right ahead!"

"No, sir," Johnny said, and his mouth felt furry and dry.

"I was just seeing if you were flying the ship, or whether you were waiting for me to tell you what to do. No matter what I say, you've got to fly the ship! Now, after this, fly it!"

"Yes, sir," Johnny said, filled with a blank, helpless fury. He wondered grimly what Streeter expected of him, it would be in-subordinate to fly the ship contrary to instructions, and it might cost him his job to follow instructions. He sat there, his arms taut and trembling with a hunger to fight.

But he kept his mouth shut. Co-pilots were always wrong if their captains said they were wrong. And co-pilots couldn't talk back.

In stony silence he watched Streeter bring the ship to the dock. Sayre, the radio operator, went forward to the bow hatch and picked up the bow line with the grapnel. The beaching crew hauled the ship to the float. In the quiet that followed the clack of the last cam roller, Streeter got up and started back through the companionway to the cabin. Johnny followed.

When he had passed into the presence of the passengers, still in their seats, Streeter addressed them in a bland, apologetic tone, with a jerk of his thumb over his shoulder in Johnny's direction.

"Don't mind the rough landings," he said. "My first officer's just learning, you know." He grinned, and went on down the aisle and outside. Johnny, white-faced with humiliation and rage, climbed up on the wing and measured the gas; and then, holding himself rigidly under control, completed his cargo routine. He couldn't stand ten days of this. He was going to blow up. And he knew if he did he was through.

At Port au Prince, Streeter shouted conflicting instructions again, and Johnny messed up that landing, too.

After the take-off, Streeter leaned over and yelled, "Leave the pilot disengaged! Climb to eight thousand feet! Let's see if you can fly instruments without spinning in!"

Johnny compressed his lips, and pulled up into the clouds. He set his course across the invisible tumbled mountains of Haiti toward San Pedro, Dominican Republic. He flew a steady, smooth course all the way, and at the proper time got his radio fix from

Sayre, and let down south of Point Santanilla over the churning sea. Then he turned northeastward again, contact, and picked up the coast.

The landing at San Pedro was worse than the others. There was a heavy ground swell, and the ship started bucking as soon as it hit; it got its nose down and did a quick water loop. Streeter grabbed the controls, his voice loud and scathing: "Vare, you're in the wrong business—you ought to be driving a truck!"

Johnny said nothing.

They took off from San Pedro, and dropped steadily farther behind schedule, bucking that blustery head wind. When darkness came, the sea and sky seemed to merge, leaving the plane suspended in an eerie blank nothingness. Johnny got on his instruments, forgetting his goading resentment toward Streeter in a strange growing unrest.

At San Juan, Johnny circled the harbor, seeing the line of lights that had been put out by the launch—one red and three white ones. He swung downwind, and then around once more, over Santurce and Condado Bay and the highway, letting down, but leaving his engine turning up at eighteen inches of manifold pressure until he got straightened out. Through the rain, the landing lights wouldn't do him much good, he thought; he had better line up with the surface lights and, using them as a level, stall the ship in. He called for full flaps, and Streeter pulled the flaps down.

Then, just when Johnny thought he had everything set, Streeter yelled, "You don't stall these crates in, at night! Fly it on! Gun it—fly it on! Get your nose down and get seventy knots—"

"You take your damn crate!" Johnny snarled, feeling the words explode in his mouth. The ship was trimmed for the glide. He jerked his hands angrily from the wheel. "Go on and land it yourself—and the hell with your jabbering!"

Bo Streeter, as if waiting for that, snapped on the lights and took the controls. He put the plane on with scarcely a jar.

While he was turning around to taxi back to the float, he looked over and said in an even, mild tone, "Well, Vare, it looks as if you can't take it. I'm sorry."

"Sorry!" Johnny said venomously. "You're sorry!" He tried

frantically to stem the rush of his words, but he couldn't. "All day you've been badgering me, trying to make me blow up." His fists clenched, and he shook one of them under Bo Streeter's square jaw. "I'm no kid just out of Pensacola that you can push around. I need this job. If I lose it I'll never get another with a line in the States, because I'm too old. But if you make one more crack the rest of this trip I'll kick your teeth in!" He glared at Streeter, his eyes sputtering fury. "I'm not kidding you, either!"

"I'll explain a few things, when we get out of this tub," Streeter said.

He did explain, as they were riding to town. It was all very impersonal, and it was too bad, he said, but he had been trying all day to find out whether Johnny could work under pressure. If he couldn't control his emotions under a little badgering, how could he control them in the face of possible death, in an emergency?

"Suppose an engine quit, or something worse, and you had to land under difficulties? Any one of a dozen things could happen that would worry you a lot more than my yelling. Yet my yelling got you so flustered you made bad landings everywhere."

"A real emergency's different," Johnny said grimly. "I've had engines quit. I've had things happen. I don't go to pieces."

Streeter's voice held a sincere regret. "But I can't be sure of that unless you can demonstrate it. You went all to pieces here."

"I got sore," Johnny said. "I've been sore all day." He bit his lip, hard. "And—and scared."

"I know," Streeter said gently. "I put the pressure on pretty hard. But I can't invent real emergencies to test you—and it's my job to find out how you'll react. I'm sorry, Vare."

Johnny sucked in a slow, tortured breath. His acute anger had come in a gust and gone in a gust, leaving him feeling weak and tremulous and very tired. He was afraid to ask the question that was tormenting him, but he had to ask it. "You mean I'm—washed up?"

"I won't make up my mind definitely till we get back to Miami," Bo Streeter said, and he looked very uncomfortable. "I—" He broke off, as if there was no use to discuss it.

Johnny sat there, seeing the lights of San Juan flow past in the rain. He felt sick and forlorn, and he felt old. There was a dull numbness pushing up under his heart. He knew that no matter what Streeter might say to him now, to soften the blow, the chief pilot's mind was made up already. At the end of the month, one of the names on that list would be: "John H. Vare—lack of emotional control; insubordination; unsuitable material; eliminate." He knew it. He could see it now in Bo Streeter's face.

And he knew there was no possible way to change Streeter's opinion, in the little time he had left.

Intermittently for the next eight days, in a leaden despair that he could not surmount, Johnny sat in the cockpit with Streeter, shuttling through the West Indies. Streeter had changed. He was pleasant and affable in a formal, impersonal way; he had endless stories about these little mountainous islands over which the route lay: Pelée and its eruption that had wiped out a city in less than a minute; Saba Island and a village which had been built on the side of a twenty-eight-hundred-foot peak and named, whimsically, Bottom; Nevis Island, where Alexander Hamilton was born. Streeter did most of the flying now, and there was no suggestion of heckling.

The ninth day, they started north to San Juan again. But thirty minutes out of Trinidad, the right engine swallowed a valve, and they had to go back. It was nine o'clock when they landed; it was one-thirty that afternoon when, the piston and cylinder changed, they took off again.

San Juan was seven hundred and sixty-one miles to the northwestward now, and if they made all their stops, it would be long after dark when they got there. And San Juan was reporting intermittent heavy rain squalls and a ceiling of twelve hundred feet, with a gusty twenty-mile wind out of the south-southeast, across the channel. A wind like that in the daytime was easy to cope with; at night, with rain and low ceilings, it would be something else. And with darkness, the ceiling would come down still more.

Bo Streeter studied his cargo manifests and his passenger list as the ship roared northward toward Fort de France, Martinique.

He had passengers for that stop, and for Pointe à Pitre, Guadeloupe; and there were passenger and cargo and mail pick-ups at both places

"We've got a load on this tub!" he exclaimed. "Everything from a bunch of women's hats to a lot of oil-well core samples!" He wrote out a radio message for Sayre to send to San Juan. There were no passengers for St. John Antigua, and little cargo; he wanted authority to gas to capacity at Pointe à Pitre and jump straight through to San Juan, which, with the increasing wind as he neared Puerto Rico, would put him there just at dusk.

They were over the Grenadines when Sayre poked a return message through the slot in the top of the cockpit door. Streeter read it, and stuffed it into his pocket, and a relieved look came over his face.

"We're going from Point à Pitre to San Juan direct, if we can take on enough gas," he said. "I'm in a hurry! With that wind lifting over the mountains south of San Juan, it's going to keep on raining there. I want to get there while we can see what we're doing, with the wind they've got."

But Pointe à Pitre had two extra passengers booked, giving them a full ship; and when they had figured their load, they found they could take only three hundred gallons of gas, which would give them less than their required forty-five minute reserve when they got to San Juan. They couldn't go straight through in one jump; they had to go into St. Thomas for fuel. Streeter, fuming with haste, took off.

It was because he was hurrying—and because of a bad chop and a heavy ground swell in St. Thomas harbor—that he chose the East Gregorie channel for landing. A murky dusk was seeping down from the clouds, and there were squalls in every direction, standing like curved slate columns against the horizon. Streeter made a quick turn, and came in with full flaps. The wind was slightly cross, and gusty; even the channel was rough. He put the ship on, kicking it downwind at the last possible moment.

It was just as the hull touched that Johnny Vare saw the changed coloring of the water ahead. It looked like a shoal, but

he didn't have time to explain. He rasped out the command, "Gun it!"

Bo Streeter flicked a surprised glance at him. He said, "Hell, don't get excited now—we're on."

And just then they hit.

They ripped over the shoal with a terrific detonation of metal, while a racking shock went through the whole plane. "Gun it!" Johnny screamed. "That took out the bottom!"

Bo Streeter poured thirty-five inches of coal to the Hornets with one snap of his wrist. The plane was staggering through the water, a bow wave shoving the nose up. They bounced off, and dropped back, the engines bellowing, trying to drag the crate clear. The bow wave was what got them off; it kicked them into the air.

For a minute, while he was cranking the flettner, Streeter was too busy to say anything. Johnny said, "What's wrong with the flaps?" He pointed to the indicator over their heads. The flaps had been down and now they were up—and nobody had pulled them up. "There's a hydraulic line broken, somewhere."

"The hell with the hydraulic lines! Go back and take a look at the bottom!" Streeter barked in a taut, accelerated voice. "I'll sit up here and circle. Make it fast! Be dark in a few minutes."

Quickly Johnny went back through the companionway, past Sayre's cubbyhole, past the stuffed cargo bins, and opened the rear door into the cabin. All the passengers gave him worried, questioning looks, and one of the men in the front seats exclaimed excitedly, "Have we got a hole in the bottom? Look at this water."

Johnny looked. Water had spurted up between the floor panels and spread out in a thin film.

He called Sanchez, the steward. He kept his voice low. "We're in a jam," he said hurriedly. "I don't know how much of a jam. But keep everybody quiet. The worst they can do is get wet. If we can't land normally, we can shove her into shallow water or beach it somewhere." And then he remembered that there wasn't much shallow water in this part of the sea. The land came up from a deep, rough ocean floor. All these little islands were in reality just mountaintops.

But he didn't worry about that. There was a job to do, a quick

job When he unfastened the floor-panel anchoring screws, a whistling blast of wind knifed his face. As he looked down past the panel into the bilge, his heart skipped a beat.

There was a gash eight inches wide and four feet long in the bottom. That shoal had gone through the hull like a massive can opener, twisting and tearing the duralumin like paper.

Standing transfixed, Johnny Vare knew that this wasn't as mild a thing as he had told Sanchez it would be. When they landed, that gaping hole would sink the ship in two minutes.

He dived through the companionway door, and forward into the cockpit. He didn't know what Streeter would do, but he knew one thing: If they couldn't find shallow water to drop this crate into, they were all going to drown.

He kept his tone calm, but a terrible dread was knotting itself in his stomach, as he shouted to Streeter, "We've got a hole in the bottom four feet long! It'll sink us by the time we get slowed down, when we land! It ripped out the hydraulic line that runs aft—that's why the flaps folded up—we can't put 'em down again, either!"

Streeter's face tightened into a peculiar compactness. He said in a level, brittle voice, "Take her over. Circle the harbor while I have a look."

Johnny said imperatively, "We haven't much gas! Hadn't we better head for San Juan? We'll make it, with ten minutes to spare."

Streeter said flatly, "Circle the harbor," and disappeared.

It was six or seven minutes before he came back. He opened the door, and yelled, "Shove for San Juan! I'm going to wedge that hole full of life preservers and seat cushions and pack all the weight I can on them. When we get to San Juan, I'll put her on close to the dock, and stay on the step and scoot her up the ramp."

Johnny said. "You're the skipper—don't you want me to do that work, and you stay at the controls, just in case—"

"I've got to fix that hole so we won't sink while we get to the ramp," Streeter snapped. "You circle over San Juan till I get finished back there." His head disappeared and the cockpit door slammed

Johnny turned west, over the blackening open sea toward San Juan. He was worried about Streeter's plan. It was a good idea—if it worked. If it didn't work, they would all end up on the bottom of San Juan harbor trapped in the ship as it sank.

A few minutes later Sayre stuck his head in the cockpit. "I've advised San Juan we're coming in with a hole in the bottom!" he yelled. "The skipper wants me in the cabin now." He went back.

Johnny bored on into the darkness. He had the engines revved down to sixteen hundred, to conserve gasoline. There wasn't much gasoline left. Both main tanks were dry. One of the auxiliaries had run dry while Streeter had been making his survey. They were on the last auxiliary—fifty-four gallons—enough for a scant forty minutes. And they were still at least thirty minutes from San Juan.

Behind him, he could hear Streeter and Sanchez and Sayre dragging cargo out of the bins. He unsnapped the canvas cover from the aperture in the cockpit door, and twisted his body and looked into the companionway. Streeter and Sayre were frantically emptying the bins of their luggage and mail bags.

It took a long time to do that, working the cargo in that cramped space. But the bins were emptied at last, and Streeter and Sayre went into the cabin and closed the companionway door. Johnny held his course steadily, counting the minutes, watching that gas gauge. The clouds pressed down from above, and the inscrutable sea seemed to rise up to meet them. The altimeter showed nine hundred feet.

The glow of San Juan grew out of darkness, ahead. The gas gauge showed almost zero. Streeter wouldn't have more than five minutes to get squared away, when he came back to the cockpit. Johnny could hear a dull banging from the cabin, as the crew fought cargo into place to weight down the stuff over the hole in the hull.

"They'd better hurry," he thought nervously

He was over San Juan now. He started to circle. The chilling thought went through his mind that if the engines ran out of gas after the plane was on the water, and before it could be beached on

the ramp, there'd be no hope for anybody to get out alive. Those seat cushions might keep out enough water to permit Streeter to taxi, as long as he stayed on the step, with power. But once the ship sagged down off the step, in this darkness and rain, it would probably sink before the crash launch could take anyone off.

He circled the harbor again, still hearing the banging back there. And just then he saw both gas-pressure-gauge needles waver.

The tanks were empty. The engines were running on the gas that was still in the lines.

He was heading southwest. Morro Point was sliding under the bow; the lights of San Juan were below him. He was afraid he could not reach the ramp, even if he made a quick one-hundred-and-eighty-degree turn and flopped into the channel. He was afraid there wasn't enough gas to keep the ship on the step from the channel up to the ramp.

With a peculiar icy, preternatural clarity of mind that precluded excitement, he started a fast turn, debating the courses of action left open. He eased back the throttles. As long as the engines were idling, they were stretching his glide, and he still had a slight choice; he was saving those final seconds of power for a quick blast of the guns. But he didn't know what to do. There was shallow water along the south of Palo Seco Point across the bay—but there were deep places too. The same danger faced him in trying to land close to the southwestern edge of Grande Island. The Inter-American base was on Grande Island, but it might take too long for men from the base to locate the plane and get to it. The danger of dropping into the channel was etched into his brain.

He finished the turn and was heading southeastward. Through the rain-smearred windshield he could see the green flashing light on Puntilla Point, the two-second flash of the light on the end of Grande Island, the weak red winking of the buoy on Yaboa Shoal. He could make the island all right. If this were a land plane—

Then, suddenly, he remembered the airport site south of the sea-plane base on Grande Island. It wasn't completed; it was in the midst of construction, with dredges still pumping in fill. A landing there was a crackup, probably—but at least nobody would drown.

He knew he might be a fool to attempt it. But he had to do something. Streeter was still in the cabin, doing what he could to prepare for the landing on water—he wasn't prepared yet, or he would have come forward. So, sitting up there alone, Johnny knew he must make the decision himself; in less than a minute, Streeter or no Streeter, hole or no hole in the hull, the plane would be down.

He turned slightly, to use the Grande Island light as a fix, and went into a straight glide. He couldn't see much, through the rain. It frightened him to see how much altitude he had lost in the turn. The altimeters showed three hundred feet. Then two hundred. He eased the guns on, to 1200 revs, fearful of under-shooting and crashing into the shore. He snapped on his landing lights, seeing them spear down and strike wind-ruffled water.

Then the lights leaped from water to muddy black sludge as the ship hurled itself on into darkness. Johnny cut back the throttles and began to pull the nose up to slow the crate down.

Just then Bo Streeter burst into the cockpit, roaring, "I'm not ready to land! Gun it!"

"We're almost out of gas!" Johnny yelled, without turning his head.

Streeter scrambled into his seat. He stared through the windshield, his eyes not yet dilated to see in the darkness. Concentrating on what was below them, he didn't see the gas-pressure warning lights go on in the cockpit. He bellowed, "You're not over the channel—that's land!" He grabbed the controls, his eyes glued to the windshield, and slammed the throttles wide open.

The engines answered roughly. But almost instantly the right one coughed and revved back, while the plane yawed. The left engine fluttered and stopped.

The plane, nose up, sagged down and struck the ground hard. It skated wildly ahead, bouncing, then slogging through mud, then teetering up on its bow, trying to nose over. It didn't nose over, because Johnny Vare was helping Streeter fight the wheel into their stomachs—and there was that twenty-mile wind. The ship stopped with a jerk and rocked back on its tail.

For a moment Bo Streeter sat there, staring out at the rain and

the mud. Finally he said quietly, "High and dry—and on your own, Vare."

Johnny Vare, still trembling, felt a gust of wild rage that he couldn't control. "What did you think I'd do, Streeter—sit up here and yell for you, while the ship fell in the drink? This wasn't a phony emergency—this was a real one. I did the only thing I could do. We're alive, aren't we?"

Bo Streeter turned then. His face had a curious, wondering look. "High and dry," he repeated, "in a seaplane on an unfinished airport—and I almost cracked you up by wasting the last drop of gas because I didn't think you knew what you were doing." He chuckled scratchily. "Maybe that idea of mine to put us into the channel wasn't too bright. This is better. The customers won't even get their feet very wet."

"So what?" Johnny Vare said bitterly.

Bo Streeter peered at him. "So don't worry about that report I'm going to make. Any guy who can make a turn like that in the dark, on instruments, and find this place with nothing but buoy and landing lights—"

"You mean that?"

"Yeah," Streeter said. He paused for a moment and added grimly, "I'm the guy who's getting the bad report this trip. I thought we had about five minutes' more gas. I had no business leaving you up here that long." He shrugged. "Well, that's the way it goes. You never know."

Johnny took a deep breath; Streeter was probably right. He was the captain and he had left his post in an emergency. The brass hats, in the investigation, would learn from the passengers that the captain had been in the cabin when the co-pilot started down to land. Suddenly he knew what he was going to do. He got up and tipped Streeter's white cap forward with his hand.

"The only thing I remember, captain," he said, "is that we planned it this way. And my word ought to be as good as yours."

In the front of the cabin he paused and waited for Streeter to emerge from the companionway. Over the excited voices he could hear the shouts of the beaching crew from the Grande Island base

as they approached, wading in the mud of this unfinished field. Through a porthole he could see flashlights penciling their beams through the rain. Streeter was at his elbow. Johnny lifted his voice to the passengers, made it blandly sarcastic:

"Don't mind the rough landing, folks—the captain made it. But the big lug ought to know better—he's been flying long enough."

He went outside, then, into the wet darkness—feeling good. He had an idea he and Bo Streeter would do a lot more flying together, and that they would get along fine.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Considered from the point of view of plot, this story falls into two parts: (a) Johnny faces an artificial crisis, contrived by Captain Bo Streeter; and (b) he faces a genuine crisis, created by events. Does this division of the struggle into two parts seem to you to confuse the single impression that the story should give? Defend your answer with reasons.

2. Considered from the point of view of character, this story is a study of First Officer John Vare. List his good traits and his undesirable qualities. Was Sam Carson fair in what he said about Vare? Give reasons for your answer.

3. Use the dictionary for: insubordinate, derision, belligerence, perennial, limbo, disgorge, probationary, dysentery, anomalously, penchant, consternation, inanely, bland, nuances, ricocheting, detonation, venomously, badgering, manifests (used as a noun), precluded.

FOR YOUR VOCABULARY

Barlow asked whether Johnny Vare was *insubordinate*. Such a word can sometimes be more easily understood if you are able to split it up into its parts: *in* = not; *sub* = low; *ordin* = rank (from *order*). An *insubordinate* person does *not* behave as if he were a member of a *lower rank*. Other words using this same root meaning are: *ordinary*, *coördinate*, *subordinate*, *extraordinary*.

Look up these words and tell what each of the prefixes (*co-*, *sub-*, *extra-*) means. Here are three words using these same prefixes: *co-pilots*, *submarine*, *extralegal*.

SOMETHING TO DO

1. Some pupil who knows his airplanes thoroughly should make a talk to the class, following right through the story, telling just what the pilots do to the plane at each stage, and explaining every technical term: c. g., revved up, gyro's precession, fly instruments, spinning in, radio fix, stall, fifteen inches of manifold pressure, grapnel, goniometer, full flaps, cranking the flettner, sixteen hundred revs, thirty-five inches of coal, stay on the step, etc.

2. Although "Co-Pilots Don't Talk Back" is hardly a story of setting, the author does give a precise, realistic geographical background. To most readers this will be a series of meaningless names; but the geography enthusiast or the philatelist in the class may wish to follow the trip in an atlas, or on a map of air routes: Miami, Biscayne Bay, Florida Straits, Hurricane Flats, Andros, Antilla, Port Padre, Port au Prince, San Pedro, San Juan, Santurce, Condado Bay, Saba Island, Nevis Island, Pelée, Trinidad, the Grenadines, Fort de France, Pointe à Pitre, St. John Antigua, St. Thomas, San Juan, Morro Point, Palo Seco Point, Grande Island, Puntilla Point, Yaboa Shoal.

FOR FURTHER READING: STORIES OF AVIATION

Aviation is such a fascinating subject that it doesn't much matter whether our reading about it is fiction or non-fiction: both kinds of material are equally entertaining, and both are found in the titles that follow.

Boys of my generation remember two books which told of air adventure in World War I:

Charles Nordhoff and James

Norman Hall Falcons of France

Elliott White Springs War Birds

During World War II, dozens of books have appeared telling of experiences of the airmen. Here are just three that tell of actual combat experiences:

Squadron Leader Paul Richey .. Fighter Pilot

Richard Thruelsen and Elliott

Arnold Mediterranean Sweep

Maude Owens Walters Combat in the Air

Recently several good anthologies of short selections about aviation have appeared. I list four of these below, along with a few other books appealing to varied interests:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| William Rose Benét | With Wings as Eagles (famous flights in poetry) |
| Rose N. Cohen | Flying High (anthology) |
| Thomas Collison | This Winged World (best anthology to date) |
| E. A. Cross | Wings for You (a high-school anthology) |
| Friedheim, Taylor, and Gordon | Fighters Up |
| Boone T. Guyton | Air Base (informative) |
| Herzberg, Paine, and Works . . . | Happy Landings (anthology) |
| Leland Jamieson | Attack! (Naval air action—fiction) |
| Wolfgang Langewiesche | I'll Take the High Road (light-plane flying) |
| Anne Morrow Lindbergh | Listen! the Wind
North to the Orient |
| Beryl Markham | West with the Night (flying in Africa) |
| Antoine de Saint-Exupéry | Night Flight
Wind, Sand, and Stars (a classic by a philosopher-pilot) |

THE MAN OF THE FAMILY

Ruth Suckow

When you mention Ruth Suckow, you think of Iowa. When you think of Iowa, you think of corn and small towns—small towns that are duplicated by the hundreds all over the United States. So Gerald in "The Man of the Family" is almost any American boy; the Oberholzers are just two of thousands of small store owners; the events of the story are such as might occur in your town or in mine.

To tell a realistic story like this in such a way as to capture and hold our interest, to make the characters and the events seem like people and events that we have seen and known, requires more skill on the part of the writer than to write some of the highly romantic adventure tales that fill the magazines. It is in this faithful portrayal of the typical American scene that Ruth Suckow has won recognition as a great artist.

There are no hair-raising adventures here, no breathless suspense, no last-minute rescues. There is just a typical American boy on his first day of work. But slowly, surely, the author will have you growing more and more interested in what makes this first job so important to Gerald—and to his family. This is a mature story. If you enjoy it, you may know that you are reading for more than the mere thrills of adventure; you are reading to learn about life and about real people.

FLOYD OBERHOLZER was just opening up the drug-store when Gerald came.

"Hello, Gerald. Want something?"

"I came to start in working."

"This morning?" Floyd was startled. "Why, school can't be over yet, is it? What is this—Wednesday?"

"Yes, but we got done with our tests yesterday, all but arithmetic, and I didn't have to take that."

"Oh, you didn't have to take that?" Floyd repeated vaguely.

"Well, you come into the store and we'll see what there is for you to do."

Gerald followed him into the drug-store.

Floyd looked around somewhat helplessly. It was only a few months since he and Lois had bought this little business in Independenceville. They knew what to do themselves, but it was a different matter setting someone else to work. They hadn't expected Gerald so soon, or wanted him. Two or three months ago, he had come into the store to ask if he couldn't have a job, and because they hated to turn the kid away—it wasn't very long after the accident in which his father had been killed—Floyd had told him: "Well, you come around when school's out. Maybe we can find something then." And now he was here.

"Well, you're starting in early," Floyd said to him. "You've beat my wife—she isn't in the store yet. Well, I don't know, Gerald—I guess you might as well sweep out, the first thing." He remembered then that Lois had swept the store before they closed last night; the boys had left so many cigarette stubs around. But he guessed it could stand it again. It would keep Gerald busy while Floyd decided what to have him do.

"All right," Gerald answered soberly. "Where do you keep your broom?"

"Right out there in the back, Gerald. See—I'll show you. Then you'll know where it is."

Gerald started in to sweep the wooden floor with awkward, scowling concentration. His back was stooped and intent. He took long hard strokes, trying to do a good job of it. Floyd looked at him, and turned and went scuttling up the stairs.

"Hey—Lois!" he called softly.

"'Smatter, pop?"

Lois, still in her bungalow apron, came to the door of the kitchen. The Oberholzers were living over the drug-store.

"Say, that kid's here."

"What kid?"

"Gerald Rayburn. He's come to start in working. Seems awful anxious to begin. What in the dickens shall I have him do?"

"You're a fine boss!" Lois began to laugh. "What's he doing now—standing in the middle of the floor and sucking his thumb?"

"I've got him sweeping."

"Why, I swept last night, you idiot!"

"Well, I know you did, but I forgot it. I didn't want to tell him to stand around. He goes at it like a little beaver. You ought to watch him. Oh, I suppose the kid *is* anxious to start in earning."

Lois didn't know what to say.

"You come down," said Floyd, "and tell him about the soda-fountain. That's your end of the business."

"Oh, it is, is it? All right, I'll come down and give the boss's orders since he doesn't know what they are himself," she replied with mock commiseration, and pinched Floyd's ear.

"Well, gosh, I didn't expect that kid the minute school let out! Most kids aren't that anxious to go to work. Isn't this the day they have the school picnic? Why, sure—that's why we got that pop."

He started down the stairs and then went back to the next-to-the-top step and stood frowning uncertainly.

"Think we can really use him, Lois?"

"Well, I guess we've got him, anyway!"

"I know we'll have to have somebody, but he's such a kid. I don't know—"

Lois said hastily: "Oh well, let's try him. You told him he could come. I feel so sorry for that family."

"Well, so do I. But then— Well, all right—"

Floyd left it at that, and scuttled down the stairs again. Lois went back to the kitchen which she herself had painted blue and white, with figured curtains, changing it from the gloomy old hole that the Tewkesburys had left it, to a gay new room. She hated to leave this beloved little place to go and help Floyd in the store. Now that they had hired just a little boy to help them for the summer, she supposed she would have to be downstairs most of the time. She almost wished she hadn't told Floyd to keep Gerald. Well, if Gerald couldn't do the work, he'd have to go, that was all.

"All right, Gerald," Floyd went into the store saying loudly and

cheerfully. "Finished that? Well, then, I guess you'd better—" His eyes, quickly roving, caught sight of the magazine rack. "I guess you'd better straighten up those magazines. Folks take 'em out and read 'em all through and then put 'em back."

"All right."

Floyd whistled as he took the long gray cambric covers off the tables in the middle of the room, where boxes of gilt-edged correspondence cards and leather-bound copies of the works of Edgar Guest had to be displayed until the graduating exercises were over. Gerald went at his work with such silent concentration that it almost embarrassed Floyd.

"What do you want I should do next?"

"Oh, well . . . Guess maybe I better show you about these cigarettes and tobacco. That's probably what they'll be after first. I'll show you how we've got things marked "

"All right."

Lois came down. Floyd gave her an expressive look and nodded toward Gerald.

"He's right at it!" Certainly the boy seemed to be trying hard. His freckled face with the crop of red hair was surly with concentration. Floyd couldn't help remembering that he was just a kid and too young to be starting in to work in earnest. He was quite willing to give up his charge and let Lois initiate him into the mysteries of the new white soda-fountain which they had installed in place of the cracked, lugubrious onyx splendor of the earlier day. Gerald stood silently beside Lois, bashfully aware of her bobbed hair and her plump white arms, answering dutifully: "Yes, ma'am."

"You can watch me this morning, Gerald, and run some errands, maybe. Wash up the glasses. Do the dirty work—how's that?"

"Yes, ma'am."

He was a little clumsy, partly out of bashfulness, but so serious and determined that Lois thought: "Goodness, I wonder if it'll last!" She wanted to give him all the help he needed, but she didn't quite know what to make of his surly little face. He hated to ask her questions, and several times she had to say, "Oh, not like that, Gerald!"

"Gee, that was an awful thing to happen to that family!" Floyd said to Lois in the back room of the store, where he had gone to look for a special package of hog medicine ordered by old Gus Reinbeck. "I think this kid kind of realizes, don't you?"

"Have they got anything, do you suppose?"

"A little insurance, they say, and that house, but not much more than to keep them until this boy can start earning."

"The mother can earn something herself, I should think," Lois said rather defiantly. *She* worked.

"Yes, but with three kids to look after . . . And anyway, what is there for a woman to do in a burg like this except take in washing?"

"Well, maybe."

Back door and front of the store were open, and through the shimmery blackness of the back screen the garden was green and fresh. A tin cup hung on an old-fashioned pump under the vines. Gerald looked longingly at the boards of the platform, wet with spilled water. There was city water in the soda-fountain, but the pump looked so much cooler out there.

"Run out and get a drink if you want to, Gerald," Lois told him. "I always go out there for my water. It's fun to work the pump." Boys never could see a pump or a drinking fountain or even a hydrant without being consumed with thirst, she knew. Lois liked boys. Gerald made her think of her kid brother. It was a shame he had to go to work. She wanted to reassure him somehow, to rumple his red hair or pat his shoulder. But she must remember that they were hiring him. They couldn't afford to keep him out of pity. Besides, he seemed determined to evade all personal advances and stuck doggedly to work. Maybe the kid was miserable at missing that picnic.

It was getting hot in town. Cars began to rattle and whirl down the street, and in a few moments Louie Grossman's big red truck drove up to the side door of the drug-store.

"Hey, Floyd! Got the pop?"

"Got the pop? You bet I've got the pop. You want it now?"

"Sure do, if it's goin' on this picnic."

"All right, sir! Want to come and help me take it out, Gerald?"

"All right."

Gerald went with Floyd into the back room of the store, bright and cool and scattered with light from the green leaves outside. He tugged at one end of the big pop case, and helped Floyd carry it outside and shove it into the truck.

"Now, another one, Gerald."

"All right."

"Well, the kids oughtn't to get thirsty today," Floyd said.

"No, they sure got plenty. What are you doing, Gerald?" Louie asked. "Ain't you going to the picnic?"

"I got to work," Gerald answered.

He went back into the store. The two men looked after him.

"He's workin' for you now, Floyd?"

"Guess so. It looks like it. He came this morning."

"Goes at it pretty good, don't he?"

"Yes, he seems to be willing. He's pretty young, but then . . . Where they going for the picnic today, Louie?"

"Out to Bailey's Creek. You ever been there?"

"Not yet. Mighty pretty place, I guess," he added.

"Yes, but it ain't much of a road."

"Well, don't tip 'em out, Louie."

"No, I'll try and keep the old bus in her tracks."

Louie started the noisy engine of the big truck. It went roaring up the street between green lawns and white houses and pink peonies, to where the school children, boys in freshly ironed blouses and girls in summery dresses, waited in a flock under the elms of the school-yard . . . then out, spinning down the graveled highway between freshly planted fields, turning into the little woods road, narrow and rutted, where the children had to bend their heads under the switch of honey locusts that left small white petals in their sun-warmed hair . . . on into the depths of green woods through the heart of which the shining creek was flowing. . . .

Lois had come to the doorway to watch the truck leave.

"I wouldn't mind going to a picnic myself on a day like this," she murmured.

When she went back into the store, she looked curiously at

Gerald. It gave her a guilty feeling, wholly unreasonable, to have him at work in their store today when it was a holiday for all the other children. But he had come of his own accord. They hadn't told him to do it.

"Did your sisters go on the picnic, Gerald?" she asked.

"Yes, *they* went," he answered, rather slightly.

"How many have you, Gerald? Just Juanita and Betty?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"And you're the only boy?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"You could have started in tomorrow just as well, Gerald."

He did not answer.

The bright morning grew hotter and hotter, until to enter the drug-store from the glaring cement outside was like going into a cool, clean-scented cavern. The regular set of loafers drifted in, asked for tobacco, and stayed, sitting on the white-topped stools at the soda fountain and trying to be facetious with Gerald. "Well, you got a new clerk?" everyone who came in demanded. It was a new joke every time. In an interval of no customers, Lois stooped down and drew out a pale green bottle frosted over with cold moisture from the case under the counter. It was still a treat to her to think she owned a store.

"I'm going to try some of this new lime stuff," she said. "See how it tastes. Don't you want the other straw, Gerald?"

"No, I guess not," he answered bashfully.

There was a glint of longing and reluctance in his eyes. But Lois thought: Maybe I oughtn't to start offering him things and being too easy with him. After all, Floyd was paying him to help them, and it wasn't her fault that his father had been killed. They were doing the best they could for him by letting him have a job. When, later, she decided to try one of those chocolates Floyd had ordered from a new traveling man, she turned her back while she nibbled it and wiped her fingers on the scrap of oiled paper in which it had been wrapped. Running the business all by themselves was still an adventure to the young Oberholzers; but even now they had run up against the fact more than once that it wasn't

just a game. They had halfway discovered the meaning of that term—"If you want to do business—" Lois couldn't pick out from the traveling man's stock the delicately scented toilet waters that she herself liked, but had to choose the red and green brands with big gaudy flowers on the labels that the girls here in town would buy—the kind that "went." She had had to freeze out old Bart Bailey who came in every morning to read the paper and the detective magazines he had no money to buy, and left dirty thumb marks on all the pages.

Noon came with the shriek of the whistle from the power-house, with the noise of cars being started and of the men driving home to dinner.

"When does your mamma expect you home for dinner, Gerald?" Lois asked

"Oh, I guess it don't matter," Gerald mumbled bashfully.

"Didn't you tell her when you'd come?"

"No ma'am."

They let him go; but if they kept him in the store, he would have to go later and let them have their dinner at noon. That was one reason why they wanted help. He was back in good time. "Well, didn't take *you* long to eat your dinner!" Floyd said. But maybe it wasn't a good thing to act surprised at his promptness. It would wear off soon enough, if they could infer anything from their experiences with Marcelle Johnston, who had pretended to work for them for three weeks in the winter.

At intervals during the afternoon, Floyd and Lois reported to each other. "We're going to have an awful time teaching him to make a decent sundae. He doesn't catch on any too fast, but he seems to be willing to do whatever you tell him." Whether they wanted to keep him or not, it was evident that he meant to stay. He wanted the job. His surly little freckled face scarcely relaxed into a smile even when there was a dog fight outside and Miss Angie Robinson's little poodle sent that big hound of Ole Swanson's off yelping. He went at whatever he was told to do with dogged earnestness, although he didn't see things for himself. He said "Yes, ma'am" with sober respect; but he would ask: "What's the price of this here kind of tobacco, Lois?" and say to customers:

"No, Floyd ain't in just now, he went over to the depot." As the afternoon wore along, his freckled face grew flushed.

"Does it seem like a long day, Gerald?" Lois asked him once. He admitted: "Kind of. Not so very."

Late in the afternoon, the picnic trucks came rattling into town with all the children disheveled and shouting. A few moments afterwards a group of girls came bursting into the store. Their bright-colored summer dresses were wrinkled, their bobs were wildly rumpled, their tired eyes were shining.

"Oh gee, but we're thirsty! We're just dying! Oh, look at Gerald Rayburn! Are you working in here, Gerald?"

"Yes, didn't you know he was?" his young sister Juanita asked. "We want six bottles of pop, Gerald," she ordered airily

"Have you got any money?"

"Yes, I have!"

"Where'd you get it then?" he demanded suspiciously.

"None of your business, Mr. Smarty! I guess it's not yours, is it?"

A bright pink flared up in Juanita's cheeks. Her eyes sparkled angrily. She was a pretty child, with red hair, like Gerald's, blazing out in a fuzzy aureole around her freckled face. She flounced down into one of the white chairs. "We want a table, don't we, kids? We don't want to sit at the fountain, like the boys." When Gerald brought the six cold red bottles carefully toppling on the tray, she lifted her little chin and disdained to look at him

"You needn't think because I'm working here, you can come in and order what you want," he told her.

"Shut up!" she whispered furiously.

Her eyes were brighter still with tears. Mamma had given her the nickel for helping with the ironing yesterday afternoon instead of going off with the girls. She had given it to her for ironing Julie Bronson's pink chemise, with all the lace, so beautifully. It was none of Gerald's business what she did with it! She said to the other girls, with flashing eyes and quivering lips:

"He thinks he's so smart now just because he's starting in to work and Betty and I aren't. You'd just think he *owned* us to hear the way he talks. I don't care. I guess he isn't the only one

who does anything. I guess I do lots of things. I'd like to see Gerald Rayburn ever wash the dishes!"

She stuck two straws into her bottle of strawberry pop and sucked it all up defiantly. Maybe she ought to have saved her nickel, but Gerald had no right trying to boss her in front of all the girls.

He told her, when she was leaving the store:

"You needn't go running around now, you can go home and help mamma."

"You keep still!" She threw her nickel down with a ring on the white counter of the soda fountain. "I guess you aren't my boss yet!"

"That's all right, I know what I'm talking about."

"That's right, Gerald," old Hod Brumskill shouted, with humorous approval. "You make the women folks mind you Ain't that so, boys?"

"You tell 'em it's so!"

They laughed loudly; and then, clustered together with their arms on the glass counter, that had a sign in red letters "Do not lean!", they tore open their packages of bitter-scented tobacco and began to talk in lowered voices about the Rayburn family: how it had been "left," how it got along, about the tragic death of Frank Rayburn, still disputing over the minutiae of that event which they had never yet been able to settle, although nearly a year had passed since the thing happened. "Well, I never could understand how a fella like that, that was used to climbin' all over everywhere, come to fall off that ladder like that. . . ." "Why he just kinda stepped backwardlike—I s'pose he forgot maybe where he was at. . . ." "Some says the ladder broke and let him down." "Naw, the ladder didn't *break*." "Well, was it true he'd been out drinkin' the night before? That's how I heard it." "Naw, he hadn't been out drinkin' the night before." "Well, I can't figger out . . ." "Why, he just kinda stepped backwards. . . ." It was terrible, they all agreed with solemn faces, to think that poor little woman should have been left with those three children, although there was dispute again about how much they had been left with. Some said they "had something," some said they "had nothing." She was a

nice woman. Yes, and she was a good-looking woman, too. . . . And then they drew closer together, and one of them said something about "Art Fox," and their voices broke into a laugh and a snicker.

Gerald was washing glasses at the soda-fountain. His freckled face flushed a dull red, and when they snickered he looked over at them furiously. He had a notion of what they were saying. When they passed him, leaving the store, they praised him loudly and self-consciously.

"Well, Gerald, you're all right, ain't you? Takin' right a-hold!"

"You bet he's all right."

"Well, Gerald's the man now, ain't that so, Gerald! He's the one."

"That's right."

The six o'clock whistle blew.

Gerald looked about hesitatingly for Floyd. Finally he went out to the back room of the store to find him.

"Shall I go now? The whistle blew."

"Yes, sure, you go along now, Gerald. I wasn't paying any attention."

Floyd was busy over some boxes on the floor. Gerald hesitated. His face was red. He wanted to ask if he had "done all right." But he was ashamed. Finally he blurted:

"Do you want I should come back tomorrow morning?"

Floyd was still busy over the boxes. Gerald waited.

"Yes, you come back in the morning, Gerald," Floyd answered cheerfully.

Gerald got out of the store as fast as he could. How bright the street seemed outside, and how fresh the air was! He felt as if he had been smelling camphor and perfumes all his life. He had a job! It seemed to him that everyone must know. He wanted people to ask him what he had been doing, it made him feel proud and important; although when Mr. Baird, the minister, who had been in the store earlier in the day, greeted him with: "Well, is the day's work over, young man?" he was suddenly too bashful to do

more than grunt in answer. He walked soberly down the main street, and broke into a run as he cut across the corner.

His feet burned. It was hard to stand all day like that, although he had told Lois he didn't mind it. He grew hot all over when he thought of the mistakes he had made. But the ache that had seemed lodged in his chest somewhere, ever since the day when his father was buried and all the relatives had told him: "Well, you'll have to look after your mamma now, Gerald, won't you?"—when his mother cried and clung to him that night—that ache was strangely eased. He was earning money. He could take care of his mother. It humiliated him that his mother should have to be doing the washing for other people, although it was only some of their neighbors; but she wouldn't have to do it always. He had not heard more than a few words of what those men in the drug-store were saying. But at the thought—the very suspicion of it—his mind felt hot and sore. If they'd been saying anything about his mother, they'd be sorry for it. He'd—he didn't know just what—but anyway, they'd better look out!

The new little semi-bungalow house looked bleak and desolate. It had been that way ever since his father died. No new flowers had been planted this spring, the clothes-line hadn't been fixed, the garage for the car they had been going to get this summer stood unpainted just as his father had left it last fall. But they would have things again. The relatives needn't say anything; he guessed he could take care of his own mother without their telling him. He loved her, but it was none of their business to know it.

She was standing in the doorway. Gerald evaded her kiss, ducked away from her and went tramping out to the kitchen. He was afraid she was going to make a fuss.

"I gotta wash my hands," he told her importantly.

She followed him and stood looking at him, pitiful and proud.

"Why don't you go up to the bathroom, sweetheart?"

"I druther wash down here."

It was what his father had done when he came home from work.

"Are you ready for supper?" she pleaded.

"You bet."

She touched his face, he couldn't avoid that. But he got into the dining room as fast as he could and sat down with satisfaction. There were all the things that he liked—hot biscuits, and jelly, and strawberries. He demanded coffee, and his mother gave it to him. Betty's little mouth puckered up and her eyes were round with amazement.

"You don't let *us* have coffee," she said.

"Well, brother's been working. He has to have it."

The two little girls chattered eagerly about the school picnic. Gerald stuck to the business of eating. He had never been so hungry; hot biscuits had never tasted so good. He replied briefly to his mother's fond questions about what he had been doing all day.

"Were Floyd and his wife good to you? Did they show you what to do?"

"Yeah, they were all right."

"Did you know how to wait on people?"

"Sure."

"Didn't it seem terribly long to you?"

"Naw."

"Well, you want to eat a good supper."

It was over now, and he didn't want to talk about it. He wished she'd let him alone.

The one cookie left on the plate was given to Gerald. Betty followed her mother into the kitchen, weeping and complaining. She was the baby, and the extra pieces of everything were for her.

"I don't see why you gave it to Gerald, mamma. You didn't even make him give me half."

"Well, darling, listen—when men have been working they get hungrier than women and little girls do, and then we have to let them have what they want to eat. We don't get so hungry."

"I was hungry."

"Were you, pet?" Her mother laughed, half commiseratingly. "Then you eat this strawberry mamma puts into your little mouth."

"I don't want a strawberry. I had enough strawberries. And

"I was working," Betty insisted. "I put on all the knives and forks. I *was* working, mamma."

"Were you? Well, you were helping. You're a nice little helper."

"Before I'd make a fuss about an old cooky!" Juanita said scornfully.

She flashed a quick indignant glance at Gerald, remembering how he had talked to her in the drug-store. Let him have everything in the house to eat if he wanted it, and if mamma wanted to give it to him! But there was an obscure justice that silenced her even while it made her resentful. Well, she wouldn't be here all her life. She'd get married some day—and then she'd do as she pleased.

Gerald went out and sat on the steps of the porch. This was the time of day when his father always used to come out here and look at the paper. Gerald was ashamed of having eaten the cooky. He thought it belonged to him, but let that baby Betty have it! He would after this. He didn't know when he had had such a good supper. He watched Bobby Parker's yard across the street so that he could shout across at Bobby the instant he came outdoors. Maybe they could go over and see those turtles Bobby's uncle had in his back-yard. It would be fun to see if they could really be taught tricks. He could hear the girls complaining about the dishes. "It's your turn tonight." "It isn't!" Gee whizz, if they couldn't even do a little thing like washing dishes!

The evening came on cool and bright. Gerald stayed on the porch steps, although Bobby didn't appear in the yard. What he had really meant to do was to ask Bobby about the picnic, and try to find out, without saying it in so many words, whether any other boy had hung around Arlene Fedderson. He didn't care, anyway. He had thought about it in the store all the time, but it didn't matter so much now. His mother was the one he had to look after. Again he felt a fine, tired glow of satisfaction. He had put in a good day's work, all right.

Then he blushed. He remembered those men at the drug-store. Here was that old Art Fox coming up the walk with a pailful of

strawberries! Well, if he thought he was coming here with those berries, he could just go away again.

"H'lo, Gerald," Art Fox called out cheerfully. He was a good-natured man, a widower, with a red sunburned face and grayish hair and mustache. He lived about a block away from the Rayburns, in a good-sized house. Gerald had always thought he was a nice man, because he never said any more than "'Lo, boys!" when the boys ran across his lawn playing run-sheep-run.

"H'lo," Gerald answered briefly.

"Your ma around anywhere?"

"I don't know."

Art Fox halted "Oh, well. . . . She ain't gone out anywhere, has she?"

"I guess she has."

What did it matter whether that was true or not? Art Fox had no business coming here. He felt a sense of pain and outrage.

"That's too bad. I thought I'd drop around and see if you folks couldn't use a few strawberries. I got a bunch of 'em ripe—too many for an old fellow to eat by himself," he added with a mild attempt at jocularly. "Didn't know as you folks had any."

"We got some."

"That so? Well, I guess you can use a few more, can't you?"

"No, we got all we want."

"That so? Well, if you got all you need. . . ." Art Fox stood there awkwardly for a moment. "Well, I guess I'll have to try to dump these on somebody else."

Gerald was silent.

"Your ma be home pretty soon, will she?"

"No, she ain't here."

"That so? Well . . . good-by, then."

Gerald said nothing. He could feel his heart thumping. He looked away. Art Fox was going down the walk with the strawberries newly washed and freshly red in the bright tin pail. Just as he turned the corner, Mrs. Rayburn came to the door.

"I thought I heard somebody. Have they gone? Was anybody here, Gerald?"

"Art Fox." Gerald did not turn around.

"Oh!" His mother seemed a little flustered. "What did he want? Has he gone away?" she asked.

"He brought some of his strawberries."

"Why, Gerald, why didn't you call me?"

"'Cause I told him we didn't want 'em. We got some of our own."

"Why, *Gerald*. . . ."

"Well, we don't want him around here," Gerald said roughly.

He stared straight ahead at a little bird hopping about on the lawn, fighting down the childish tears that made his throat ache and his eyes burn. That sense of pain and outrage swelled in his heart. He thought of the unfinished garage standing bare and desolate in the back-yard—his father's old coat still hanging in the kitchen entry. If his mother couldn't take care of herself, he'd do it for her. He was the man of the house now. Art Fox could stay at home where he belonged. This was *their* home. She was *his* mother. Above that ache of unmanly tears he felt a hard exultance. They wouldn't laugh any more in the drug-store. They wouldn't talk about her.

She looked flushed and disconcerted. She stood in the doorway looking at Gerald. The back of his red head was like his father's. So was the set of his sturdy shoulders. She looked at them with an unwilling respect that turned slowly to resentment. All these last few weeks, a secret girlish pleasure had been growing up in her heart most surprisingly out of the blackness of her grief and loneliness. She knew that she was admired. She had thought it hidden from everyone. At times she had laughed and called herself a fool; and at times her eyes were dreamy and a warmth settled softly about her. Now it was shamed and trampled . . .

She started to say something to Gerald. But she stopped, as she had always stopped with Frank. She felt her anger melting helplessly away from her. He was so proud of working for her. He was so proud of his strength. He was only a little boy, after all—her little boy, sitting small and pitiful and unapproachable in the twilight.

She turned, her face suddenly quivering, went back into the hot darkness of the empty house, and sat down there alone.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Why is "The Man of the Family" a particularly good title for this story?

2. List some realistic details and events in the story which make this town and this drug-store seem familiar to you. Be specific.

3. Why was Gerald not a complete success as a clerk in the drug-store? Would you let him work for you? What is his best trait?

4. Why did the men snicker when they mentioned Art Fox? Why did Gerald resent their talking about his mother? Why didn't his mother scold Gerald for getting rid of Art Fox as he did?

5. Did you admire the Oberholzers? Why?

6. Use the dictionary for: commiseration, lugubrious, onyx, facetious, jocularity

FOR YOUR VOCABULARY

Gerald was described as working at his first job "like a little beaver." To reinforce this impression Miss Suckow used the following words to characterize Gerald and his behavior: *anxious, concentration, intent, dutifully, trying hard, serious, determined, doggedly, willing, earnestness, promptness, sober respect*. Show how each word applies to Gerald's behavior. Look up in a dictionary any you are not sure of. See if you can add other words that might be used for this purpose.

SOMETHING TO DO

Organize a panel discussion to consider what a high-school graduate ought to do after his graduation.

For panel discussion you should choose a topic on which there are several opinions. Questions which admit of only two opinions, or opposing points of view, should probably be argued in a debate rather than discussed by a panel. For instance, if there are only two views—get a job after graduation, or go to college at once—the subject should be debated. But there may be three or more points of view, *e. g.*: that the graduate should get a full-time job after graduation; that he should go to a conventional college at once, and finish as quickly as possible; that he should enroll in a work-and-study-plan college, such as Antioch; that he should get a job, and attend night school. In such a case, the subject is appropriate for panel discussion; and the panel should be large enough so that each point of view is represented by at least one speaker.

The panel may be organized in several ways. Let the class pick four or more pupils to serve on the panel; these pupils will elect one of their number to serve as leader. Or, the pupils interested in the topic may volunteer to be panel members. (Or, if there is to be a series of panel discussions, the class may be divided into a number of groups, each group to elect its own leader and to choose its own topic for discussion.)

Let the members of the panel sit at three sides of a table, with the open side toward the class. The leader should sit in the middle.

If you are chosen as a member of the panel, prepare yourself to state clearly several good reasons for your opinion on the question which is to be discussed. Show a proper respect for opposing opinions; but state your own view forcefully.

If you are chosen as leader of the panel, prepare to open the discussion by stating its purpose: "This panel is held to find out whether it is better to go to college after high-school graduation, or to go to work at once, or to alternate or combine work and study." Having made clear the problem before the panel, you may call on one member of the panel to begin. When he has presented his point of view, someone else may voluntarily pick up the subject. But it is probably best for you as leader to see that the positive statement of each viewpoint is given, before argument is allowed to begin. After each point of view has been stated, the discussion may be allowed to proceed somewhat informally. As leader, you should see that the less aggressive members of the panel have an opportunity to speak when they wish. If sharp differences of opinion develop, you must prevent the discussion from becoming a wrangle.

A time limit for the discussion should be set beforehand. At the end of that time, the leader should stop the discussion. Then he (or someone else previously appointed) should summarize the discussion by stating all the separate and distinct ideas brought out, and the conclusion arrived at (if any), thus: "It is the finding of this panel that high-school graduates who are financially able should go on to college after high-school graduation, for three reasons: first, because . . . ; second, because . . . ; and last, because . . ."

FOR FURTHER READING

There are many good stories in Ruth Suckow's books, *Iowa Interiors* (1926) and *Children and Older People* (1931), or the omnibus volume, *Carry-Over* (1936). From one of these read two or three

more of her realistic short stories, for example: "A Start in Life," "Good Pals," "Midwestern Primitive," "Renters," "The Big Kids and the Little Kids," "The Top of the Ladder," "Uprooted," or "Wanderers."

TITTY'S DEAD AND TATTY WEEPS

Ursula MacDougall

"Titty's Dead and Tatty Weeps" is included in this book because I want you to read at least one stream-of-consciousness story besides "The Waltz," and this story is an excellent example of that technique.

At first reading, however, you may have some trouble following this stream of consciousness. In the first place, the stream-of-consciousness method itself has limitations: The time covered is very brief—even a novel seldom covers more than 15–18 hours, at most; though one character is revealed in detail, the others often remain vague and shadowy; there is no conversation at all, except what may be reported at second hand; and the action is usually very slight.

In the second place, this particular story is complicated by the fact that through the mind of the speaker there keeps running an old nursery story. In her childhood she heard this story read aloud over and over again until she knew it by heart. Now it comes back to her and seems to apply to the situation in which she finds herself after the death of her sister. The nursery tale is "Titty Mouse and Tatty Mouse"; it is from a book called *English Fairy Tales*. Other stories in this same book also keep forcing their way into the speaker's consciousness, but the actual words of "Titty Mouse" are the most insistent. In our story they are printed in italics so that you may recognize them for what they are; but even in this form they may cause you some difficulty. Perhaps if before you try to read the whole story you first look ahead and read everything in italics, you will acquire some notion of the facts in the nursery tale. Then, when you read the story as a whole, you will better understand the relationship of the old nursery tale to the main story.

The stream-of-consciousness technique is used chiefly by authors who have an almost exclusive interest in character; it enables them to achieve a high degree of convincing realism. I think you will agree that in the following story the author triumphs over the limitations of her method and gives us an excellent character portrayal.

THAT noise must have been Ella's door banging shut. I shouldn't have thought I could hear it across the street, but on a clear cold night like this you can hear every sound. There go her heavy overshoes clumping down her front steps. Funny how all the spring goes out of your feet when you're past sixty. I've noticed that about my own—hardly worth picking them up and putting them down plunk so many times in a day. I'll just stand here and listen through the door until I'm sure that Ella's coming here. Oh, I know very well she'll be over here in a minute, filling all my living-room, overflowing into every corner of my house, and my life, telling me what to do now that Sally's gone. Don't you walk across that street, Ella. I can't have you in my house to-night, not even for an hour. Now that Sally's dead I don't need advice from anybody—you, Ella, or Martha Yates either. *Titty's dead and Tatty weeps and the stool hops and the broom sweeps.* What's that story popping into my head for all day long, over and over? First thing in the morning and when I wake up in the night. I hadn't thought of it for years and now I can't get away from it. It's worse since I got back two days ago—the first time I've been alone in the house. I'm glad I dismissed Mary, though. No matter what I wanted, she would have kept on doing things the way Sally liked them done.

I don't believe Ella crossed the street after all. There's no use my waiting here in the hall for her. She must have gone to Martha Yates's house. She'll bring her here. They'll both think I was terribly heartless to let Mary go, after so many years in my family. It was heartless of me, too, and I'll never forget her face when I told her, and right after the funeral. I might have waited a day. "I'm going to Bermuda, Mary," I said, "and when I get back I shall want someone younger and stronger for the house-work." I wanted to cry, but how could I have kept her? She turned the Delft vases on the mantel flower side out again when I had changed them to the windmill side the very hour Sally was brought home. It was too plain a sign of how things would be, the house not a bit my house with Mary here remembering Sally's ways, and how I used to give in to her. *Titty mouse and Tatty*

mouse both lived in a house, Titty mouse went a-leasing and Tatty mouse went a-leasing, so they both went a-leasing. I've got to stop saying those silly words. I can remember exactly how that English Fairy Tales book looked—gray with lavender letters. It was third from the right, second shelf from the bottom in the nursery bookcase. Nana read it to us so often we knew it by heart. *Titty mouse leased an ear of corn and Tatty mouse leased an ear of corn, so they both leased an ear of corn.* No, I oughtn't to have dismissed Mary, if for no other reason than that she was Nana's daughter. And all she said was, "Miss Susan, I don't understand. I've been with you and your sister thirty-two years." Ella and Martha Yates will have something to say about that when they get here—and they're sure to come because Ella told me this morning in the post office that they'd be over tonight. So they could help me arrange things, she said. If I'd been the one killed they'd have known better than to try to arrange things for Sally!

It's been like that all along. I'm the "quiet Winslow girl." I can remember in our high-school days how both the boys who came Sunday evenings really came to see Sally. I could have laughed and made jokes, too, if Sally's laugh hadn't been so loud and jolly and her jokes such funny ones. "Oh, Susan's always been solemn," she'd say to them. "Haven't you, Susie?" "*Then,*" said the door, "*I'll jar,*" so the door jarred. I never was sure what that meant—did it mean stay ajar? "The Three Sillies" was in that book, and "Nimmy Nimmy. Not, your name's Tom Tit Tot," and "Master of All Masters." That was the funniest. We used to laugh till our stomachs ached over White-faced Siminy. Sally always hoped for a white-faced kitten to name that.

They'll be here any minute now. I don't suppose I have to stand here any longer waiting for them. Only I'd like to decide what I'm going to say to them. Oh, I don't want them to come. They'll spoil it. I've been a different person since Sally died. I think I've been myself and Sally too. All the time in Bermuda and on the boat I felt like Sally. Nobody knew I was supposed to be shy, so for once I could use my tongue and talk when I wanted to. I played shuffleboard to make a fourth one day just because

no one expected me to hang back and refuse. And at the hotel they said I was a friendly person. That was the way I felt inside too. I still do. I want to stay this way, like Sally, and not be afraid. I believed I changed the very minute I knew that Sally was dead. I didn't have time to plan how I'd feel. When they brought her home and laid her on the bed, I felt strong suddenly. It may have been her strength that went into me. Even at the funeral I wasn't unhappy. I seemed new all over to myself—like a butterfly just out of its chrysalis. *Now there was an old form outside the house and when the window creaked the form said, "Window, why do you creak?" "Oh," said the window, "Titty's dead and Tatty weeps and the stool hops and the broom sweeps, the door jars and so I creak." "Then," said the old form, "I'll run round the house." So the old form ran around the house.*

Now that's what my going to Bermuda was like—like the old form running around the house. It's what Sally would have done if I'd been the one to die and nobody would have been surprised. But "So unlike *you*, Susan," they said. Anyway, I've learned now what sort of person I might have been. I'm like Sally, but only when people like Sally aren't around. There's only room for one really free person in any family, I suppose, and Sally chose that rôle for herself. What happened to me didn't matter. Of course I loved her. She was your older sister, Susan Winslow, you and she were inseparable. You were like a cup and saucer or a hook and eye. But I didn't cry at the cemetery—I didn't feel like crying even. Instead, those foolish words kept saying themselves over and over to me, interrupting my grieving over Sally. *Titty mouse made a pudding and Tatty mouse made a pudding. So they both made a pudding. And Tatty mouse put her pudding into the pot to boil but when Titty went to put hers in, the pot tumbled over and scalded her to death.*

If I should get Mary back she'd listen and say nothing when I ordered buttered carrots with the lamb, but when she served the dinner there'd be peas, the way Sally always planned it. Thirty-two years she said she'd been with us. But suppose she had heard me yesterday singing those negro spirituals at the top of my voice

—she knew that Sally was the one who sang and that it was Sally that had bursts of noisiness like that—“Miss Susan’s the quiet one.” Oh, I’d never have dared to open my mouth to sing a note with Mary in the house. And then what if she had caught me this morning eating tomato soup for breakfast and a sardine sandwich? “Miss Susan was never one for changes,” she liked to say about me. “Always a three-minute egg and two pieces of light brown toast for her.” *Then Tatty sat down and wept; then a three-legged stool said, “Tatty, why do you weep?” “Titty’s dead,” said Tatty, “and so I weep.” Then said the stool, “I’ll hop,” so the stool hopped.* But Ella will think I should have kept Mary—she’ll say so, too. She won’t know I have to have someone new here who won’t know I’m different now from the person I used to be. And Martha Yates will back Ella up and they’ll scold me, too, just the way they’re used to hearing Sally do. Perhaps they won’t say anything tonight about the living room furniture’s being all changed around, but I’ll see them looking.

I think that’s Martha’s door shutting I’ll open this one a little and listen. Yes, they’re on their way here now. Ella said they would have a plan to suggest. They don’t know I have a plan, too. If Bob hadn’t died of pneumonia that winter when we were young, Sally would have married, and I wouldn’t have lived with her all these years. In that case I’d really be like her, now. Joe Hendricks said to me this morning outside the chain store, “Why, the trip did you good, Susan! I’ve never seen you looking so hearty—more like your sister than yourself.” It was after I met Ella at the post office that I saw Joe. He kept me talking—didn’t seem to want to go on. After all, we’re the only people left in town he calls by their first names, Sally and me. Poor fellow! He said he didn’t have much to live for any more except his walk to the post office and the chance of a word with an old friend like me now and then. He almost cried telling me how they’re going to tear down the Carter House and put a block of stores there. “I’ve lived in that hotel for twenty years,” he said, “in the same room all that time.” It was the way he said Sally and I have always been able to cheer him up more than anybody (“You two always knew how to get some fun out of life,” he said) that put the notion into my

head. He thinks I'm just like Sally, because she always did the talking and I never opened my mouth except to agree with her.

I thought it all out on my way home from the marketing. Ella would drop dead if she knew the letter's all written and in my pocket. After they go tonight, I'll walk to the corner and mail it so that I won't change my mind. I've made it very clear to him that it's a favor to me, not to him. I couldn't say that, with him in my house so old and mournful and set in his ways, I'd be able to keep the new self that's grown out of the me Sally left behind her. I told him in the letter, "You mustn't be afraid of what they'll say about us, Joe. The whole town will laugh, of course, but they'll all know we're both past the age for foolishness." That ought to make it seem all right to him—not as if I had any ideas in my head. It will upset the church people to have me marry so soon after Sally's death—but with him to look after and plan for and with a new maid who won't stand there with her mouth open if I tell him a funny joke—well, Sally won't be so dead as people think she is. I'll hold the letter tight like this all the time they are here. Perhaps I'll say, toss it off as Sally would, "I'm thinking of getting married. My plans are made, so don't trouble yourselves about me." But I'd better not mention Joe's name to them, until he's had time to answer

They're turning into the gate now. Overshoes make a queer squeak on hard-packed snow. I wish I hadn't changed the furniture around just yet, they are sure to notice. Oh, don't come in. Please go away, don't ring my doorbell. They know me so well—the way Sally and Mary knew me. I needn't open the door—I don't have to. I can call to them through this panel and say I have a sore throat and can't see them tonight. What was that story with the name we couldn't ever remember? It was in the same book—something about The Laidly Worm. That picture always gave me the shivers, but I didn't have to hurry past it fast so as not to see—the way I did with The Golden Arm. His wife stood there in her grave clothes, wanting her arm. He was half sitting up in bed, just catching sight of her in the doorway. There was another story named the Golden something—it came just after

Titty Mouse and Tatty Mouse—*So the walnut tree shed all its leaves and the little bird moulted all its feathers.*

Up the steps now, overshoes stamping off the snow on the porch. Their voices are too loud. "Come in, Ella. It's nice to see you, Martha. I'm glad you could both come over tonight." I've said those words. Now they'll say words, too, but I'll be holding on to the letter, stamped and ready in my pocket. I'll listen to what they say, but I'll mail it when they've gone. Martha's eyes are on the furniture. Now she's saying, "Quite a few changes here, I see, Susan." I don't need to answer anything. Ella's saying that I ought to try to get more rest, I look worn out and no wonder, she's saying. She's glad I'm back so she can look after me and chirk me up a bit, she says. She's saying she has a perfectly marvellous plan to tell me. She says I'm to wait—just wait till she tells me. Now we're sitting down—it's nice to be sitting. The Delft vases are still windmill-side-out, the way I put them again when Mary left. I wonder if Ella knows what I did about Mary—she won't like it, when she knows. Ella's voice is laughing—it sounds so sure. It shrivels me up so that it's hard to listen. She's saying that she's all alone and that I'm all alone now, too, and that I'm to rent this house and move over to her house with her and that I'm to bring Mary with me. She says I won't have any worries any more and wouldn't Sally be pleased? Ella's excited. she's quite out of breath.

Now I must say something to her. I'll say, "What a kind idea! We must talk it over."

That's what I meant to say, but I think I heard my voice saying something quite different. I think I said, "*Then,*" said the old man, "*I'll tumble off the ladder and break my neck.*" I must have spoken quite softly because they didn't seem to understand. "What?" That was Martha Yates asking me, crossly, too. "What on earth are you muttering, Susan?" That was Ella. "I said that I thought we ought to think it over and not be hasty." That was my voice, so I said that.

Now I think Ella is getting angry at me. Her voice sounds louder. "Nonsense," she is saying. "I tell you there's no need to

think it over or even discuss it. It's much the best arrangement for you. Everything's settled. All you have to do, Susan, is to agree."

Ella is telling me a lot more about how it will be living in her house. Martha Yates is saying Yes and Yes. I don't know just when I crumpled up my letter, but I can feel it all wrinkled now in my pocket. Well, I suppose it doesn't matter, much. I can't seem to listen to Ella when her voice goes on and on so without ever stopping. If she would speak more softly I would know what she's saying. She and Martha Yates seem to be feeling very pleased about something. While they're talking I'll just finish up—the words keep crowding down on me, faster. There's no need to go on shoving them out of my mind. *So he tumbled off the ladder and broke his neck And when the old man broke his neck, the great walnut tree fell down with a crash and upset the old form and the house, and the house falling knocked the window out and the window knocked the door down and the door upset the broom, and the broom upset the stool and poor little Tatty mouse was buried beneath the ruins.*

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. What did Susan do "the very hour Sally was brought home"? How did she feel at the funeral? What is revealed by these details of feeling and action?
2. Make a list of adjectives describing Susan.
3. Do you think the ending of the story consistent with the character of Susan? What specific items in her previous thoughts prepare you for this ending?
4. What is the central impression? What other truths about human nature do you learn from this story?

FOR YOUR VOCABULARY

Susan remarked that she and Sally had been *inseparable*—"like a cup and saucer" or "a hook and eye." The word "inseparable" belongs to a large family of words beginning with "in-," meaning "not," and ending with "able," meaning "able to be." "Inseparable," of course, means "not able to be separated." What are the meanings of the following words: *indefinable, indefensible, incredible, inaudible,*

inestimable, illegible, immeasurable, irreconcilable? Note that "in-" becomes "il-," "im-," and "ir-" before l, m, and r, respectively. Note also that "-able" sometimes becomes "-ible" and poses a nice little spelling problem.

SOMETHING TO DO

1 Get a copy of *English Fairy Tales* by W. W. Jacobs and read "Titty Mouse and Tatty Mouse" to the class. Our story contains references also to other fairy tales in that volume. Read these, and explain the references to the class.

2. Write a brief bit of stream-of-consciousness narrative for one of the characters in the story other than Susan. Sally just before her death, Mary when she is being dismissed, or Martha Yates when Ella is arguing with Susan would be suitable subjects. Or perhaps you would prefer to take your stream of consciousness from some real-life situation: a jealous girl watching a rival making headway with her boy friend, a student tempted to cheat; a worried parent waiting late at night for the son or daughter to come home. Remember that the purpose of your writing is to reveal character.

EASTER PROCESSION

Josephine W. Johnson

Here is a story which you may find a bit difficult; but it is worth whatever effort it may cost you to understand it. You are going to go to church on Easter Sunday with little Mary and her parents and young brother Martin. You will see events through Mary's eyes; but she doesn't understand them. You also, therefore, may at first be confused. You will get some help from the remarks of Mother, who knows what is going to happen but doesn't approve and is afraid; and more help from the remarks of Father, who also knows, but expects to enjoy the Easter procession. If, at the end of your reading, you are still puzzled, read the story a second time. You will need to do so for the first page anyway; it doesn't come clear the first time. When you are through, you should be able to state the theme of this story in your own words.

"WELL, Clark had it coming to him," she heard her father say.

Mary cracked her egg carefully and peeled away the purple shell. The broken chips looked pretty on the white tablecloth. Martin had an orange one, but he didn't eat it. He liked to put the napkin ring on its head and pretend it was Humpty Dumpty. The morning sun poured in across the table and made the lilies burning-white. The whole room smelled of the Easter lilies.

"'You'll embarrass the church,' Reverend Sarpy told him. 'You'll make a mockery out of religion.' But Chebar comes back with a note saying he ain't interested in what the deacons think—and if this be mockery,' Luke said, 'then Christ *needs* more cartoonists!'"

Mary saw her mother smile a little doubtfully down at the coffee cup. "Clark had it coming to him, I guess," she said, "but *this*—"

"Mr. Clark talks to us in Sunday school sometimes," Martin announced suddenly. "He's got striped hair."

"Mr. Clark makes very good pecans," Mary said informingly. "They come in two kinds—Clark's Mammoth and Clark's Selected. Only the Selected ones aren't so good. They both come in cellophane and cost a lot. Peanuts're cheaper."

"Luke Chebar's a fanatic," her mother said.

Father picked up his fork again and broke off a bit of bacon, but he didn't eat it. He was staring absent-mindedly at the lilies. "Not a fanatic," he said. "Just a literal man. When a person says something, he thinks they mean it. That causes a lot of misunderstanding."

Mary completed the last gold crumb of her egg and looked out the window hopefully. If the sun kept on like this, she could wear her yellow hat with the cherry on it.

"What time's the procession begin?" Mother asked.

"Twelve noon," her father said. He raised one eyebrow and gulped his coffee. "Luke's a smart man."

"Oh," her mother said, and then, "Will they go right by the church?"

"Right by the church and then his house, and end up at the factory again."

"Pick up your shells, Mary," her mother said, "and go get dressed. We don't want to sit on the aisle again." She looked worried.

Mary gathered up the wrinkled purple shell and went out to the kitchen door. The lilacs were in bloom near the steps, and the smell of them heavy in the sun; big purple pyramids of sweetness. Martin was outside already, grubbing in the grass, his egg bulging out of his pocket. "*Christisrisen Christisrisen sonsofmen and angelssay . . .*" he chanted to himself. He mounded up a big pile of clover and balanced the yellow egg on top of it. Then he lay down on the grass and kicked his heels at the sky and laughed all by himself.

Mary picked a bunch of bright gold dandelions to pin on her coat, and stained her fingers. "*The littul flowers came through the ground . . . at Easter time . . . at Easter time . . .*" she hummed. It was a most unusually beautiful day. Most unusual for Easter.

They walked down the street slowly. Her father pointing out the clusters of maple seeds that broke and spiraled down toward the walk. Martin stopping to stare solemnly at every person that passed. You could see people strolling slowly along other streets, couples and families in three and four, coming toward the church; little boys in white panamas with blue ribbons, and one little girl in bright yellow like a goldfinch. Mary fingered the cherry on her hat and wished she could see herself.

Daffodils were yellow along the public parkway, and a Japanese cherry tree in bloom. The cross on top of the church glittered and looked black against the white clouds. Other church bells began to ring in scattered places over the town—loud and joyfully, it seemed to Mary. She lifted her face up and squinted at the sun. "What's going to happen at twelve o'clock that you said?"

"A demonstration," her father answered. "A procession of pecan shellers. The ones at Clark's."

"What's a demonstration?" Martin asked. He was listening hard.

"People carrying banners," Mary informed him. "Like a circus parade, but no elephants." She wondered hopefully if they would give bags of nuts away.

Martin lost interest with the absence of elephants, and mounted the church steps in his one-leg-at-a-time motion which carried him triumphantly through the arch and into the dark vestibule, chilly even in summer. The smell of lilies poured out as soon as the door was opened, and the deep lung-sound of the organ.

"There goes Mr. Clark," Mary whispered loudly. "Won't he be late for the procession?"

"Sh!" her father said. "Hush!"

Mr. Clark turned around and looked down at Mary. He smiled and said, "Hello, lady." Mary's heart warmed and stretched toward him. He looked rather handsome in his dark Sunday clothes with pin-stripes on the pants, and his half-gray half-black hair brushed back smooth. It looked striped like a skunk, and he had a white daisy in his buttonhole. There was a faint silverness around his jaws, and a smell of fresh toilet water. Mary decided

it was amazing what a difference happened to a person's face when it smiled. Mrs. Clark had round vague cheeks and a stiff mouth. She had worried eyes, and carried a stiff embroidered purse. She seemed very attached to her husband. They had one young son about sixteen; he never came to church, though. They lived in a house with stone pillars at the gate, and in summer pink and purple petunias sprayed down from the urns on top of them. . . . "*Mr. Clark had it coming to him.* . . ." Mary repeated her father's voice in her mind. She wondered what mysterious thing was coming, and if he would look so calm and fresh if he knew. She felt a vague sympathy for him, sitting there all unmindful—a sympathy somewhat diluted by a delicious sense of impending doom.

Her father shook hands with Mr. Clark in a sort of good-natured duty way and gave him the Rotary grip, but sitting down in the pew afterward he looked grave and withdrawn. Every now and then he would start to reach for a cigarette, and then shove them back in his pocket again.

The smell of lilies got stronger in the warm air as the service went on. There were red tulips in the windows, and lots of young girls had gardenias on their coats. Everyone looked fresh and happy except her father.

"*For I, being taken up, will draw all men to me . . .*" the minister read slowly. The white choir rose up like a gentle wave, and the anthem began. Mary drowsed comfortably against her father's sleeve. She wondered what sound the stone made when it was rolled away . . . rolled away . . . rolled. . . . She sat up with a jerk, hearing the sound of the clock striking twelve, and the whistle of a train.

"*Ye must be born again,*" the minister read. He was closing the book, and one of the choir boys picked up the heavy gold cross. The organ began again and the choir filed out, singing. Everybody started picking up their coats and gloves and programs. Mr. Clark leaned over and helped Mary on with her new blue serge "A very nice service," he said and looked at Father. Mrs. Clark smiled and bowed. Mary's father bowed back at her. His eyes had a grave, expectant look.

In the vestibule Mr. Clark slipped one of the lilies into Mary's hand. "Here, little lady," he said. He was an usher and had a right to give lilies away.

Outside it was glaring-bright and hard to see. She clung to her father's hand and stumbled down the steps. Martin was yawning and blinking in the light.

"I think we ought to go home right away," Mother said. She sounded nervous, and fingered her gloves.

"Just a minute. They're coming now," Father said.

Mary looked up the street and saw a strange, wavering cluster of white things moving down toward them, marching down the street under the spring elms.

"The procession!" Martin whispered. He ran out toward the curb and jumped up and down with excitement.

Mary heard Mr. Clark make a queer snorting sound. "Well, for God's sake!" he said.

"Yes, for God's sake," her father said. He was smiling a little.

The people coming out of the church stopped and gathered on the sidewalk. They clustered together.

As the procession got nearer, Mary could see Luke Chebar marching in front. He was a big man, although more tall than wide, and you couldn't very well miss him.

"It's amazing," she heard her mother say. "Incredible. John, let's get out of here!"

But her father didn't move.

Luke marched in front, carrying a big white banner by himself. YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN was printed across it in bright orange letters. He had on his work clothes still, but he wore a neat red tie, and his bushy hair was brushed and parted.

Behind him came a long trail of people. They were all marching rather quietly, but some of them smiled and talked to each other in snatches. They were mostly young Negro girls in bright shabby dresses. One had a pretty purple skirt, but it was torn at the hem, and her shoes wobbled at the heels. She was a pretty girl and carried a big bunch of white paper lilies. Mary remembered seeing her lots of times coming back from the pecan place in the evenings. They all walked very slowly so you could read every

word of what was printed on the banners. They stepped together as though to music, but they didn't have any. After Luke, came a sign saying THOU SHALT LOVE THY NEIGHBOR AS THYSELF. Just like that. Purple letters on a white flour-sack.

Martin pointed at a big banner behind the purple one. "What's that one say?" he piped. It was carried by two skinny girls who looked tired. "WHATSOEVER YE WOULD THAT MEN SHOULD DO TO YOU, DO YE EVEN SO TO THEM," Mary read. "That's out of the Bible, too. But the next one isn't!"

It was a big banner, and two older men carried it up on poles. It was printed in bright red and still looked almost shining-wet in the sun. WOULD YOU WANT US TO WORK YOU FOURTEEN HOURS A DAY? WOULD YOU WANT US TO PAY YOU FIVE DOLLARS A WEEK? WOULD YOU WANT US TO SEE THAT YOU LIVED IN A RAT-HOLE SHACK?

"It's blasphemy," somebody murmured.

"What's blasphemy?" Martin said.

His father fumbled for a cigarette with his hands shaking. "Truth," he said.

"FOR NOTHING IS SECRET, THAT SHALL NOT BE MADE MANIFEST," Mary read aloud, and then looked quick for the one that came after it.

JAMES CLARK GETS 20,000 DOLLARS A YEAR SALARY, it said.

CLARK PECANS, INC. PAYS 10% DIVIDENDS.

WE LIVE ON FIVE DOLLARS A WEEK.

She looked around at the people near her. They all looked queer. One man changed from gray to a purplish red and clenched his fists. Somebody laughed. People were peering back and forth, looking for Clark. He was just standing there. You couldn't tell what he thought at all.

The banners kept going by . . . WOE UNTO YOU THAT ARE RICH, FOR YE HAVE RECEIVED YOUR CONSOLATION . . . WOE UNTO YOU THAT ARE FULL, FOR YOU SHALL HUNGER . . . Mary saw the white banner waver in a thinnish hand, and the sweat running down an old man's face. More paper lilies and then GOD FORGIVE MR. CLARK was all that one sign

said. A bunch of ragged children carrying dusty paper palms, some of them marching solemnly with rapt faces, and one little Negro giggling and hiding his mouth.

"This is a terrible thing!" Mr. Campbell muttered.

"Practically un-Christian, isn't it?" Father said. He was grinning.

Mary saw a big banner coming, with great purple letters on it. It was the largest of all, and looked like a verse printed out.

FIVE DOLLARS A WEEK, it said.

NO PLUMBING

NO MEDICINE

NO COAL

NO ICE

NO MILK

NO SHOES

"Say, what is this?" a man said. "A masquerade?"

Her father smiled on one side of his mouth. "An *unmasking*, it looks to me," he said.

"It's revolutionary!" Mr. Campbell said. His hands shook on his cane.

"Profoundly," her father murmured.

"What's going to happen now?" Mary said. "What's going to happen next?" Her eyes were glued on the last great banner, a big sign painted in blazing orange: WHY CALL YOU ME LORD, LORD AND DO NOT THE THINGS I SAY? it shouted.

"John," Mother said, "let's go home." She took Martin's hand and started to turn away.

Father looked over at her, then down at Mary. "I'll meet you a little later," he said. He dropped his cigarette and took Mary's hand. "Hold on to your lily there," he said. "We're going to take a big step!"

She felt herself swung out over the gutter and into the street, and smelled the warm tar and sweat and the lily in her hand, all mixed up together.

They were right in the last of the parade. The great orange banner overhead, and the palms and wrinkled lilies all around, bobbing in the children's fists. "Hi," a little girl said. Mary

looked back at the sidewalk as though it were miles away—a confused cluster of black and spring-colored things moving and murmuring, like ants, and the black opening of the church door, and the sun on the steps. She looked up at her father, excited. He was carrying a pole of the orange sign, and one of the kids had shoved him out a green paper palm.

"Where're we going?" she asked him.

"Oh, a far long way," her father said. "But we've got good legs!" He was really smiling.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. The theme of this story is one of its most important values. If you have trouble deciding what it is, go back and hunt out all the things that are said about Mr. Clark; then study again the legends on the banners of the marchers.

2. What is the significance of the text the minister read, "Ye must be born again"?

3. The minister and the deacons seemed to be opposed to Luke Chebar's plan for a procession. The minister said, "You'll embarrass the church; you'll make a mockery out of religion." Comment on this point of view.

4. What is wrong with Mr. Clark's kind of Christianity? Give some examples from real life of his kind of Christianity.

5. Explain what Mary's father meant when he defended Luke Chebar: "Not a fanatic. Just a literal man. When a person says something, he [Luke] thinks they mean it. That causes a lot of misunderstanding." Who had said things without meaning them?

6. Martin says of Mr. Clark, "He's got striped hair." The author refers to this hair again later, with a comparison. Find the comparison. What is the significance of it?

7. Mary's father is an interesting character. When Mr. Clark exclaimed, "Well, for God's sake!" he repeated smilingly, "Yes, for God's sake." And when Mr. Campbell declared, "It's revolutionary!" he murmured, "Profoundly." What do these speeches reveal about him?

8. Another value of this story is the clearness of the observation—the sharpness with which details of scene are described. Here are examples: "The broken chips looked pretty on the white tablecloth." "Mary picked a bunch of bright gold dandelions to pin on her coat,

and stained her fingers." Find half a dozen other such instances of the sharp detail with which the author visualizes and describes scenes and events.

9. Use the dictionary for: fanatic, impending, incredible, blasphemy, manifest, masquerade.

FOR YOUR VOCABULARY

Mary's father called Luke Chebar a *literal* man. Luke spoke *literally* and understood people *literally*—as if they meant just what they said. But often people don't mean exactly what they say. Instead of speaking *literally*, they may speak *figuratively*, or *ironically*, or *equivocally*, or *hypocritically*, or *profanely*. Find out what these words mean, and give examples of remarks spoken in each of these ways. Explain what is meant by saying that in this story the expression "for God's sake" is used both *profanely* and *literally*. Mary's father says, "We're going to take a big step." Explain how in this instance he spoke both *literally* and *figuratively*.

SOMETHING TO DO

Write the first few paragraphs of a story. Try to insert into these opening paragraphs the five famous w's of narrative writing: who, what, where, when, why. Avoid a long introduction. Plunge at once into the action. Conversation is always acceptable. Point everything toward some central impression which is clear in your mind. Identify early the two opposing forces engaged in a struggle, if you want to inject suspense at once.

THE MARK OF THE BEAST

Rudyard Kipling

Rudyard Kipling is an English writer, famous for his stories of Englishmen in India. In many of these stories he tells us of the strange gods of the East. The following story is a masterpiece of horror fiction. For the sake of the emotional effect, read it through at one sitting without interruption. And for the supernatural elements, don't forget the "willing suspension of disbelief."

Your Gods and my Gods—do you or I know which are the stronger?
—*Native Proverb.*

EAST of Suez, some hold, the direct control of Providence ceases; Man being there handed over to the power of the Gods and Devils of Asia, and the Church of England Providence only exercising an occasional and modified supervision in the case of Englishmen.

This theory accounts for some of the more unnecessary horrors of life in India: it may be stretched to explain my story.

My friend Strickland of the Police, who knows as much of natives of India as is good for any man, can bear witness to the facts of the case. Dumoise, our doctor, also saw what Strickland and I saw. The inference which he drew from the evidence was entirely incorrect. He is dead now; he died in a rather curious manner, which has been elsewhere described.

When Fleete came to India he owned a little money and some land in the Himalayas, near a place called Dharmasala. Both properties had been left him by an uncle, and he came out to finance them. He was a big, heavy, genial, and inoffensive man. His knowledge of natives was, of course, limited, and he complained of the difficulties of the language.

He rode in from his place in the hills to spend New Year in the

station, and he stayed with Strickland. On New Year's Eve there was a big dinner at the club, and the night was excusably wet. When men foregather from the uttermost ends of the Empire, they have a right to be riotous. The Frontier had sent down a contingent o' Catch-'em-Alive-O's who had not seen twenty white faces for a year, and were used to ride fifteen miles to dinner at the next Fort at the risk of a Khyberree bullet where their drinks should lie. They profited by their new security, for they tried to play pool with a curled-up hedge-hog found in the garden, and one of them carried the marker round the room in his teeth. Half a dozen planters had come in from the south and were talking "horse" to the Biggest Liar in Asia, who was trying to cap all their stories at once. Everybody was there, and there was a general closing up of ranks and taking stock of our losses in dead or disabled that had fallen during the past year. It was a very wet night, and I remember that we sang "Auld Lang Syne" with our feet in the Polo Championship Cup, and our heads among the stars, and swore that we were all dear friends. Then some of us went away and annexed Burma, and some tried to open up the Soudan and were opened up by Fuzzies¹ in that cruel scrub outside Suakim, and some found stars and medals, and some were married, which was bad, and some did other things which were worse, and the others of us stayed in our chains and strove to make money on insufficient experiences.

Fleete began the night with sherry and bitters, drank champagne steadily up to dessert, then raw, rasping Capri with all the strength of whisky, took Benedictine with his coffee, four or five whiskies and sodas to improve his pool strokes, beer and bones at half-past two, winding up with old brandy. Consequently, when he came out, at half-past three in the morning, into fourteen degrees of frost, he was very angry with his horse for coughing, and tried to leapfrog into the saddle. The horse broke away and went to his stables; so Strickland and I formed a Guard of Dishonor to take Fleete home.

Our road lay through the bazaar, close to a little temple of Hanuman, the Monkey-god, who is a leading divinity worthy of respect. All gods have good points, just as have all priests. Personally, I attach much importance to Hanuman, and am kind to his people—

¹ **Fuzzies:** native fighters in the Sudan in Africa.

the great gray apes of the hills One never knows when one may want a friend.

There was a light in the temple, and as we passed, we could hear voices of men chanting hymns. In a native temple, the priests rise at all hours of the night to do honor to their god. Before we could stop him, Fleete dashed up the steps, patted two priests on the back, and was gravely grinding the ashes of his cigar-butt into the forehead of the red, stone image of Hanuman. Strickland tried to drag him out, but he sat down and said solemnly:

"Shee that? 'Mark of the B—beasht! I made it. Ishn't it fine?"

In half a minute the temple was alive and noisy, and Strickland, who knew what came of polluting gods, said that things might occur. He, by virtue of his official position, long residence in the country, and weakness for going among the natives, was known to the priests and he felt unhappy. Fleete sat on the ground and refused to move. He said that "good old Hanuman" made a very soft pillow.

Then, without any warning, a Silver Man came out of a recess behind the image of the god. He was perfectly naked in that bitter, bitter cold, and his body shone like frosted silver, for he was what the Bible calls "a leper as white as snow." Also he had no face, because he was a leper of some years' standing, and his disease was heavy upon him. We two stooped to haul Fleete up, and the temple was filling and filling with folk who seemed to spring from the earth, when the Silver Man ran in under our arms, making a noise exactly like the mewing of an otter, caught Fleete round the body and dropped his head on Fleete's breast before we could wrench him away. Then he retired to a corner and sat mewing while the crowd blocked all the doors.

The priests were very angry until the Silver Man touched Fleete. That nuzzling seemed to sober them.

At the end of a few minutes' silence one of the priests came to Strickland and said, in perfect English, "Take your friend away. He has done with Hanuman, but Hanuman has not done with him." The crowd gave room and we carried Fleete into the road.

Strickland was very angry. He said that we might all three

have been knifed, and that Fleete should thank his stars that he had escaped without injury.

Fleete thanked no one. He said that he wanted to go to bed. He was gorgeously drunk.

We moved on, Strickland silent and wrathful, until Fleete was taken with violent shivering fits and sweating. He said that the smells of the bazaar were overpowering, and he wondered why slaughterhouses were permitted so near English residences. "Can't you smell the blood?" said Fleete.

We put him to bed at last, just as the dawn was breaking, and Strickland invited me to have another whisky and soda. While we were drinking he talked of the trouble in the temple, and admitted that it baffled him completely. Strickland hates being mystified by natives, because his business in life is to overmatch them with their own weapons. He has not yet succeeded in doing this, but in fifteen or twenty years he will have made some small progress.

"They should have mauled us," he said, "instead of mewing at us. I wonder what they meant. I don't like it one little bit."

I said that the Managing Committee of the temple would in all probability bring a criminal action against us for insulting their religion. There was a section of the Indian Penal Code which exactly met Fleete's offense. Strickland said he only hoped and prayed that they would do this. Before I left I looked into Fleete's room, and saw him lying on his right side, scratching his left breast. Then I went to bed cold, depressed, and unhappy, at seven o'clock in the morning.

At one o'clock I rode over to Strickland's house to inquire after Fleete's head. I imagined that it would be a sore one. Fleete was breakfasting and seemed unwell. His temper was gone, for he was abusing the cook for not supplying him with an underdone chop. A man who can eat raw meat after a wet night is a curiosity. I told Fleete this and he laughed.

"You breed queer mosquitoes in these parts," he said. "I've been bitten to pieces, but only in one place."

"Let's have a look at the bite," said Strickland. "It may have gone down since this morning."

While the chops were being cooked, Fleete opened his shirt and

showed us, just over his left breast, a mark, the perfect double of the black rosettes—the five or six irregular blotches arranged in a circle—on a leopard's hide. Strickland looked and said, "It was only pink this morning. It's grown black now."

Fleete ran to a glass.

"By Jove!" he said, "this is nasty. What is it?"

We could not answer. Here the chops came in, all red and juicy, and Fleete bolted three in a most offensive manner. He ate on his right grinders only, and threw his head over his right shoulder as he snapped the meat. When he had finished, it struck him that he had been behaving strangely, for he said, apologetically, "I don't think I ever felt so hungry in my life. I've bolted like an ostrich."

After breakfast Strickland said to me, "Don't go. Stay here, and stay for the night."

Seeing that my house was not three miles from Strickland's, this request was absurd. But Strickland insisted, and was going to say something when Fleete interrupted by declaring in a shame-faced way that he felt hungry again. Strickland sent a man to my house to fetch over my bedding and a horse, and we three went down to Strickland's stables to pass the hours until it was time to go out for a ride. The man who has a weakness for horses never wearies of inspecting them; and when two men are killing time in this way they gather knowledge and lies the one from the other.

There were five horses in the stables, and I shall never forget the scene as we tried to look them over. They seemed to have gone mad. They reared and screamed and nearly tore up their pickets; they sweated and shivered and lathered and were distraught with fear. Strickland's horses used to know him as well as his dogs; which made the matter more curious. We left the stable for fear of the brutes throwing themselves in their panic. Then Strickland turned back and called me. The horses were still frightened, but they let us "gentle" and make much of them, and put their heads in our bosoms.

"They aren't afraid of *us*," said Strickland. "D'you know, I'd give three months' pay if *Outrage* here could talk."

But *Outrage* was dumb, and could only cuddle up to his master

and blow out his nostrils, as is the custom of horses when they wish to explain things but can't. Fleete came up when we were in the stalls, and as soon as the horses saw him, their fright broke out afresh. It was all that we could do to escape from the place un-kicked. Strickland said, "They don't seem to love you, Fleete."

"Nonsense," said Fleete; "my mare will follow me like a dog." He went to her; she was in a loose-box; but as he slipped the bars she plunged, knocked him down, and broke away into the garden. I laughed, but Strickland was not amused. He took his moustache in both fists and pulled at it till it nearly came out. Fleete, instead of going off to chase his property, yawned, saying that he felt sleepy. He went to the house to lie down, which was a foolish way of spending New Year's Day.

Strickland sat with me in the stables and asked if I had noticed anything peculiar in Fleete's manner. I said that he ate his food like a beast; but that this might have been the result of living alone in the hills out of the reach of society as refined and elevating as ours for instance. Strickland was not amused. I do not think that he listened to me, for his next sentence referred to the mark on Fleete's breast, and I said that it might have been caused by blister-flies, or that it was possibly a birthmark newly born and now visible for the first time. We both agreed that it was unpleasant to look at, and Strickland found occasion to say that I was a fool.

"I can't tell you what I think now," said he, "because you would call me a madman; but you must stay with me for the next few days, if you can. I want you to watch Fleete, but don't tell me what you think till I have made up my mind."

"But I am dining out tonight," I said.

"So am I," said Strickland, "and so is Fleete. At least if he doesn't change his mind."

We walked about the garden smoking, but saying nothing—because we were friends, and talking spoils good tobacco—till our pipes were out. Then we went to wake up Fleete. He was wide awake and fidgeting about his room.

"I say, I want some more chops," he said. "Can I get them?"

We laughed and said, "Go and change. The ponies will be round in a minute."

"All right," said Fleete. "I'll go when I get the chops—underdone ones, mind."

He seemed to be quite in earnest. It was four o'clock, and we had had breakfast at one; still, for a long time, he demanded those underdone chops. Then he changed into riding clothes and went out into the veranda. His pony—the mare had not been caught—would not let him come near. All three horses were unmanageable—mad with fear—and finally Fleete said that he would stay at home and get something to eat. Strickland and I rode out wondering. As we passed the temple of Hanuman, the Silver Man came out and mewed at us.

"He is not one of the regular priests of the temple," said Strickland. "I think I should peculiarly like to lay my hands on him."

There was no spring in our gallop on the race-course that evening. The horses were stale, and moved as though they had been ridden out.

"The fright after breakfast has been too much for them," said Strickland.

That was the only remark he made through the remainder of the ride. Once or twice I think he swore to himself; but that did not count.

We came back in the dark at seven o'clock, and saw that there were no lights in the bungalow. "Careless ruffians my servants are!" said Strickland.

My horse reared at something on the carriage drive, and Fleete stood up under its nose.

"What are you doing, grovelling about the garden?" said Strickland.

But both horses bolted and nearly threw us. We dismounted by the stables and returned to Fleete, who was on his hands and knees under the orange-bushes.

"What the devil's wrong with you?" said Strickland.

"Nothing, nothing in the world," said Fleete, speaking very quickly and thickly. "I've been gardening—botanizing, you know. The smell of the earth is delightful. I think I'm going for a walk—a long walk—all night."

Then I saw that there was something excessively out of order somewhere, and I said to Strickland, "I am not dining out."

"Bless you!" said Strickland. "Here, Fleete, get up. You'll catch fever there. Come in to dinner and let's have the lamps lit. We'll all dine at home."

Fleete stood up unwillingly, and said, "No lamps—no lamps. It's much nicer here. Let's dine outside and have some more chops—lots of 'em and underdone—bloody ones with gristle."

Now a December evening in Northern India is bitterly cold, and Fleete's suggestion was that of a maniac.

"Come in," said Strickland, sternly. "Come in at once."

Fleete came, and when the lamps were brought, we saw that he was literally plastered with dirt from head to foot. He must have been rolling in the garden. He shrank from the light and went to his room. His eyes were horrible to look at. There was a green light behind them, not in them, if you understand, and the man's lower lip hung down.

Strickland said, "There is going to be trouble—big trouble—to-night. Don't you change your riding-things."

We waited and waited for Fleete's reappearance, and ordered dinner in the meantime. We could hear him moving about his own room, but there was no light there. Presently from the room came the long-drawn howl of a wolf.

People write and talk light of blood running cold and hair standing up and things of that kind. Both sensations are too horrible to be trifled with. My heart stopped as though a knife had been driven through it, and Strickland turned as white as the tablecloth.

The howl was repeated, and was answered by another howl far across the fields.

That set the gilded roof on the horror. Strickland dashed into Fleete's room. I followed, and we saw Fleete getting out of the window. He made beast-noises in the back of his throat. He could not answer us when we shouted at him. He spat.

I don't quite remember what followed, but I think that Strickland must have stunned him with the long boot-jack or else I should never have been able to sit on his chest. Fleete could not

speak, he could only snarl, and his snarls were those of a wolf, not of a man. The human spirit must have been giving way all day and have died out with the twilight. We were dealing with a beast that had once been Fleete.

The affair was beyond any human and rational experience. I tried to say "Hydrophobia," but the word wouldn't come, because I knew that I was lying.

We bound this beast with leather thongs of the punkah-rope,² and tied its thumbs and big toes together, and gagged it with a shoe-horn, which makes a very efficient gag if you know how to arrange it. Then we carried it into the dining-room, and sent a man to Dumoise, the doctor, telling him to come over at once. After we had despatched the messenger and were drawing breath, Strickland said, "It's no good. This isn't any doctor's work." I, also, knew that he spoke the truth.

The beast's head was free, and it threw it about from side to side. Anyone entering the room would have believed that we were curing a wolf's pelt. That was the most loathsome accessory of all.

Strickland sat with his chin in the heel of his fist, watching the beast as it wriggled on the ground, but saying nothing. The shirt had been torn open in the scuffle and showed the black rosette mark on the left breast. It stood out like a blister.

In the silence of the watching we heard something without, mewling like a she-otter. We both rose to our feet, and, I answer for myself, not Strickland, felt sick—actually and physically sick. We told each other, as did the men in *Pinafore*,³ that it was the cat.

Dumoise arrived, and I never saw a little man so unprofessionally shocked. He said that it was a heart-rending case of hydrophobia, and that nothing could be done. At least any palliative measures would only prolong the agony. The beast was foaming at the mouth. Fleete, as we told Dumoise, had been bitten by dogs once or twice. Any man who keeps half a dozen terriers must expect a nip now and again. Dumoise could offer no help. He could only certify that Fleete was dying of hydrophobia. The beast was

² **punkah**: a large portable fan suspended from the ceiling for ventilating a room, worked by a servant pulling on a rope.

³ **Pinafore**: a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta.

then howling, for it had managed to spit out the shoe-horn. Dumoise said that he would be ready to certify to the cause of death, and that the end was certain. He was a good little man, and he offered to remain with us; but Strickland refused the kindness. He did not wish to poison Dumoise's New Year. He would only ask him not to give the real cause of Fleete's death to the public.

So Dumoise left, deeply agitated; and as soon as the noise of the cart wheels had died away, Strickland told me, in a whisper, his suspicions. They were so wildly improbable that he dared not say them out aloud; and I, who entertained all Strickland's beliefs, was so ashamed of owning to them that I pretended to disbelieve

"Even if the Silver Man had bewitched Fleete for polluting the image of Hanuman, the punishment could not have fallen so quickly."

As I was whispering this the cry outside the house rose again, and the beast fell into a fresh paroxysm of struggling till we were afraid that the thongs that held it would give way.

"Watch!" said Strickland. "If this happens six times I shall take the law into my own hands. I order you to help me."

He went into his room and came out in a few minutes with the barrels of an old shot-gun, a piece of fishing-line, some thick cord, and his heavy wooden bedstead. I reported that the convulsions had followed the cry by two seconds in each case, and the beast seemed perceptibly weaker.

Strickland muttered, "But he can't take away the life! He can't take away the life!"

I said, though I knew that I was arguing against myself, "It may be a cat. It must be a cat. If the Silver Man is responsible, why does he dare to come here?"

Strickland arranged the wood on the hearth, put the gun-barrels into the glow of the fire, spread the twine on the table and broke a walking stick in two. There was one yard of fishing line, gut, lapped with wire, such as is used for *mahseer-fishing*, and he tied the two ends together in a loop.

Then he said, "How can we catch him? He must be taken alive and unhurt."

I said that we must trust in Providence, and go out softly with

polo-sticks into the shrubbery at the front of the house. The man or animal that made the cry was evidently moving round the house as regularly as a night-watchman. We could wait in the bushes till he came by and knock him over.

Strickland accepted this suggestion, and we slipped out from a bath-room window into the front veranda and then across the carriage drive into the bushes. In the moonlight we could see the leper coming round the corner of the house. He was perfectly naked, and from time to time mewed and stopped to dance with his shadow. It was an unattractive sight, and thinking of poor Fleete, brought to such degradation by so foul a creature, I put away all my doubts and resolved to help Strickland from the heated gun-barrels to the loop of twine—from the loins to the head and back again—with all tortures that might be needful.

The leper halted in the front porch for a moment and we jumped out on him with the sticks. He was wonderfully strong, and we were afraid that he might escape or be fatally injured before we caught him. We had an idea that lepers were frail creatures, but this proved to be incorrect. Strickland knocked his legs from under him and I put my foot on his neck. He mewed hideously, and even through my riding-boots I could feel that his flesh was not the flesh of a clean man.

He struck at us with his hand and feet-stumps. We looped the lash of a dog-whip round him, under the armpits, and dragged him backward into the hall and so into the dining-room where the beast lay. There we tied him with trunkstraps. He made no attempt to escape, but mewed.

When we confronted him with the beast the scene was beyond description. The beast doubled backward into a bow as though he had been poisoned with strychnine, and moaned in the most pitiable fashion. Several other things happened also, but they cannot be put down here.

"I think I was right," said Strickland. "Now we will ask him to cure this case."

But the leper only mewed. Strickland wrapped a towel round his hand and took the gun-barrels out of the fire. I put the half of the broken walking stick through the loop of the fishing-line and

buckled the leper comfortably to Strickland's bedstead. I understood then how men and women and little children can endure to see a witch burned alive; for the beast was moaning on the floor, and though the Silver Man had no face, you could see horrible feelings passing through the slab that took its place, exactly as waves of heat play across red-hot iron—gun-barrels for instance.

Strickland shaded his eyes with his hands for a moment and we got to work. This part is not to be printed.

The dawn was beginning to break when the leper spoke. His mewings had not been satisfactory up to that point. The beast had fainted from exhaustion and the house was very still. We unstrapped the leper and told him to take away the evil spirit. He crawled to the beast and laid his hand upon the left breast. That was all. Then he fell face down and whined, drawing in his breath as he did so.

We watched the face of the beast, and saw the soul of Fleete coming back into the eyes. Then a sweat broke out on the forehead and the eyes—they were human eyes—closed. We waited for an hour but Fleete still slept. We carried him to his room and bade the leper go, giving him the bedstead, and the sheet on the bedstead to cover his nakedness, the gloves and the towels with which we had touched him, and the whip that had been hooked round his body. He put the sheet about him and went out into the early morning without speaking or mewings.

Strickland wiped his face and sat down. A night-gong, far away in the city, made seven o'clock.

"Exactly four-and-twenty hours!" said Strickland. "And I've done enough to ensure my dismissal from the service, besides permanent quarters in a lunatic asylum. Do you believe that we are awake?"

The red-hot gun-barrel had fallen on the floor and was singeing the carpet. The smell was entirely real.

That morning at eleven we two together went to wake up Fleete. We looked and saw that the black leopard-rosette on his chest had disappeared. He was very drowsy and tired, but as soon as he saw

us, he said, "Oh! Confound you fellows. Happy New Year to you. Never mix your liquors. I'm nearly dead."

"Thanks for your kindness, but you're over time," said Strickland. "Today is the morning of the second. You've slept the clock round with a vengeance."

The door opened, and little Dumoise put his head in. He had come on foot, and fancied that we were laying out Fleete.

"I've brought a nurse," said Dumoise. "I suppose that she can come in for . . . what is necessary."

"By all means," said Fleete, cheerily, sitting up in bed. "Bring on your nurses."

Dumoise was dumb. Strickland led him out and explained that there must have been a mistake in the diagnosis. Dumoise remained dumb and left the house hastily. He considered that his professional reputation had been injured, and was inclined to make a personal matter of the recovery. Strickland went out too. When he came back, he said that he had been to call on the Temple of Hanuman to offer redress for the pollution of the god, and had been solemnly assured that no white man had ever touched the idol and that he was an incarnation of all the virtues laboring under a delusion. "What do you think?" said Strickland.

"I said, "There are more things. . . .'"⁴

But Strickland hates that quotation. He says that I have worn it threadbare.

One other curious thing happened which frightened me as much as anything in all the night's work. When Fleete was dressed he came into the dining-room and sniffed. He had a quaint trick of moving his nose when he sniffed. "Horrid doggy smell, here," said he. "You should really keep those terriers of yours in better order. Try sulphur, Strick."

But Strickland did not answer. He caught hold of the back of a chair, and, without warning, went into an amazing fit of hysterics. It is terrible to see a strong man overtaken with hysteria. Then it

⁴ From *Hamlet*:

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

struck me that we had fought for Fleete's soul with the Silver Man in that room, and had disgraced ourselves as Englishmen forever, and I laughed and gasped and gurgled just as shamefully as Strickland, while Fleete thought that we had both gone mad. We never told him what we had done

Some years later, when Strickland had married and was a church-going member of society for his wife's sake, we reviewed the incident dispassionately, and Strickland suggested that I should put it before the public.

I cannot myself see that this step is likely to clear up the mystery; because, in the first place, no one will believe a rather unpleasant story, and, in the second, it is well known to every right-minded man that the gods of the heathen are stone and brass, and any attempt to deal with them otherwise is justly condemned.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. What is the meaning of the first two paragraphs in the story? What is their purpose? What is the purpose of the final paragraph, in which Kipling ironically says that "right-minded people" will not believe his story?

2. Name specific details of atmosphere in this story which are designed to create an effect of horror. Did you feel the horror? If not, do you think it Kipling's fault or your own?

3. Use the dictionary for: polluting, nuzzling, distraught, pelt, accessory, palliative, perceptibly, incarnation, dispassionately.

FOR YOUR VOCABULARY

When the priests assured Strickland that he was "an *incarnation* of all the virtues," they meant that he embodied all the virtues. They might have said that he was "all the virtues *incarnate*" (in the flesh, or in bodily form). The root of these two words, *carn-*, means "flesh." Other interesting words with the same root are *carnage* (slaughter, flesh of the slain); *carnal* (pertaining to the body, opposite of "spiritual"); *carnivorous* (flesh-eating); *incarnadine* (flesh-colored); *reincarnation* (the belief that souls are reborn in new bodies). *The Incarnation* (with a capital letter) refers to the union of God and the human body in the person of Jesus.

SOMETHING TO DO

Divide the class into groups of three or four and let each group act out in pantomime a scene from this story or any other story the class has read in this book. Let the class try to guess what scene each group is acting out. If upon first performance a scene is not recognizable, let the group attempt to improve it in a second performance. Maybe they will have to add a line or two of dialogue.

FOR FURTHER READING

Among Kipling's novels, I might suggest for your reading *Captains Courageous*, *Puck of Pook's Hill*, or *Kim*. Then there are the *Jungle Book* and the *Second Jungle Book*. Among his volumes of short stories, there are the *Just So Stories*, *Plain Tales from the Hills*, *Mine Own People*, and *Soldiers Three*. The following stories are especially recommended: "The Man Who Was," "The Man Who Would Be King," "Moti Guj—Mutineer," "Namgay Doola," "The Phantom 'Rickshaw," "They," "Wee Willie Winkie," and "Without Benefit of Clergy."

BLUE MURDER

Wilbur Daniel Steele

The story I am asking you to read now is very difficult. Although you will be carried along by its violence and suspense, you may not understand everything that is going on in the minds and hearts of its characters. This is an adult story, and will require your full attention and all your powers of understanding. It is also a great story, and fully deserves your best efforts.

AT MILL CROSSING it was already past sunset. The rays, redder for what autumn leaves were left, still laid fire along the woods crowning the stony slopes of Jim Bluedge's pastures; but then the line of the dusk began and from that level it filled the valley, washing with transparent blue the buildings scattered about the bridge, Jim's house and horse sheds and hay barns, Frank's store, and Camden's blacksmith shop.

The mill had been gone fifty years, but the falls which had turned its wheel still poured in the bottom of the valley, and when the wind came from the Footstool way their mist wet the smithy, built of the old stone on the old foundations, and their pouring drowned the clink of Camden's hammer.

Just now they couldn't drown Camden's hammer, for he wasn't in the smithy; he was at his brother's farm. Standing inside the smaller of the horse paddocks behind the sheds he drove in stakes, one after another, cut green from saplings, and so disposed as to cover the more glaring of the weaknesses in the five-foot fence. From time to time, when one was done and another to do, he rested the head of his sledge in the pocket of his leather apron (he was never without it; it was as though it had grown on him, lumpy

with odds and ends of his trade—bolts and nails and rusty pliers and old horseshoes) and, standing so, he mopped the sweat from his face and looked up at the mountain.

Of the three brothers he was the dumb one. He seldom had anything to say. It was providential (folks said) that of the three enterprises at the Crossing one was a smithy; for while he was a strong, big, hungry-muscled fellow, he never would have had the shrewdness to run the store or the farm. He was better at pounding—pounding while the fire reddened and the sparks flew, and thinking, and letting other people wonder what he was thinking of.

Blossom Bluedge, his brother's wife, sat perched on the top bar of the paddock gate, holding her skirts around her ankles with a trifle too much care to be quite unconscious, and watched him work. When he looked at the mountain he was looking at the mares, half a mile up the slope, grazing in a line as straight as soldiers, their heads all one way. But Blossom thought it was the receding light he was thinking of, and her own sense of misgiving returned and deepened.

"You'd have thought Jim would be home before this, wouldn't you, Cam?"

Her brother-in-law said nothing.

"Cam, look at me!"

It was nervousness, but it wasn't all nervousness—she was the prettiest girl in the valley; a small part of it was mingled coquetry and pique.

The smith began to drive another stake, swinging the hammer from high overhead, his muscles playing in fine big rhythmical convulsions under the skin of his arms and chest, covered with short blond down. Studying him cornerwise, Blossom muttered, "Well, *don't* look at me then!"

He was too dumb for any use. He was as dumb as this: when all three of the Bluedge boys were after her a year ago, Frank, the storekeeper, had brought her candy: chocolates wrapped in silver foil in a two-pound Boston box. Jim had laid before her the Bluedge farm and with it the dominance of the valley. And Camden! To the daughter of Ed Beck, the apple grower, Camden had brought a *box of apples!*—and been bewildered too, when, for all

she could help it, she had had to clap a hand over her mouth and run into the house to have her giggle.

A little more than just bewildered, perhaps. Had she, or any of them, ever speculated about that? . . . He had been dumb enough before; but that was when he had started being as dumb as he was now.

Well, if he wanted to be dumb let him be dumb. Pouting her pretty lips and arching her fine brows, she forgot the unimaginative fellow and turned to the ridge again. And now, seeing the sun was quite gone, all the day's vague worries and dreads—held off by this and that—could not be held off longer. For weeks there had been so much talk, so much gossip and speculation and doubt.

"Camden," she reverted suddenly. "Tell me one thing; did you hear—"

She stopped there. Some people were coming into the kitchen yard, dark forms in the growing darkness. Most of them lingered at the porch, sitting on the steps and lighting their pipes. The one that came out was Frank, the second of her brothers-in-law. She was glad. Frank wasn't like Camden; he would talk. Turning and taking care of her skirts, she gave him a bright and sisterly smile.

"Well, Frankie, what's the crowd?"

Far from avoiding the smile, as Camden's habit was, the store-keeper returned it with a brotherly wink for good measure. "Oh, they're tired of waiting down the road, so they come up here to see the grand arrival." He was something of a man of the world, in his calling he had acquired a fine turn for skepticism. "Don't want to miss being on hand to see what flaws they can pick in 'Jim's five hundred dollars' wuth of experiment.'"

"Frank, ain't you the least bit worried over Jim? So late?"

"Don't see why."

"All the same, I wish either you or Cam could've gone with him."

"Don't see why. Had all the men from Perry's stable there in Twinshead to help him get the animal off the freight, and he took an extra rope and the log chain and the heavy wagon, so I guess no matter how wild and woolly the devil is he'll scarcely be climb-

ing in over the tailboard. Besides, them Western horses ain't such a big breed; even a stallion."

"All the same—(look the other way, Frankie)." Flipping her ankles over the rail, Blossom jumped down beside him. "Listen, Frank, tell me something; did you hear—did you hear the reason Jim's getting him cheap was because he killed a man out West there, what's-its-name, Wyoming?"

Frank was taking off his sleeve protectors, the pins in his mouth. It was Camden, at the bars, speaking in his sudden deep rough way, "Who the told you that?"

Frank got the pins out of his mouth. "I guess what it is, Blossie, what's mixed you up is his having that name, 'Blue Murder.'"

"No sir! I got some sense and some ears You don't go fooling me."

Frank laughed indulgently and struck her shoulder with a light hand.

"Don't you worry. Between two horsemen like Jim and Cam—"

"Don't *Cam* me! He's none of *my* horse. I told Jim once—" Breaking off, Camden hoisted his weight over the fence and stood outside, his feet spread and his hammer in both hands, an attitude that would have looked a little ludicrous had anyone been watching him.

Jim had arrived. With a clatter of hoofs and a rattle of wheels he was in the yard and come to a standstill, calling aloud as he threw the lines over the team, "Well, friends, here we are."

The curious began to edge around, closing a cautious circle. The dusk had deepened so that it was hard to make anything at any distance of Jim's "expiriment" but a blurry silhouette anchored at the wagon's tail. The farmer put an end to it, crying from his eminence, "Now, now, clear out and don't worry him; give him some peace tonight, for Lord's sake! Git!" He jumped to the ground and began to whack his arms, chilled with driving, only to have them pinioned by Blossom's without warning.

"Oh, Jim, I'm so glad you come. I been so worried; gi' me a kiss!"

The farmer reddened, eyeing the cloud of witnesses. He felt awkward and wished she could have waited. "Get along, didn't I tell you fellows?" he cried with a trace of the Bluedge temper. "Go wait in the kitchen then; I'll tell you all about everything soon's I come in. . . . Well now—wife—"

"What's the matter?" she laughed, an eye over her shoulder. "Nobody's looking that matters. I'm sure Frank don't mind. And as for Camden—"

Camden wasn't looking at them. Still standing with his hammer two-fisted and his legs spread, his chin down and his thoughts to himself (the dumb head) he was looking at Blue Murder, staring at that other dumb head, which, raised high on the motionless column of the stallion's neck, seemed hearkening with an exile's doubt to the sounds of this new universe, tasting with wide nostrils the taint in the wind of equine strangers, and studying with eyes accustomed to far horizons these dark pastures that went up in the air.

Whatever the smith's cogitations, presently he let the hammer down and said aloud, "So you're him, eh?"

Jim had put Blossom aside, saying, "Got supper ready? I'm hungry!" Excited by the act of kissing and the sense of witnesses to it, she fussed her hair and started kitchenward as he turned to his brothers.

"Well, what do you make of him?"

"Five hundred dollars," said Frank. "However, it's your money."

Camden was shorter. "Better put him in."

"All right; let them bars down while I and Frank lead him around."

"No, thanks!" The storekeeper kept his hands in his pockets. "I just cleaned up, thanks. Cam's the boy for horses."

"He's none o' my horses!" Camden wet his lips, shook his shoulders, and scowled. "Be damned, no!" He never had the right words, and it made him mad. Hadn't he told Jim from the beginning that he washed his hands of this fool Agricultural College squandering, "and a man killer to the bargain"?

"Unless," Frank put in slyly, "unless Cam's scared."

"Oh, is Cam scared?"

"Scared?" And still, to the brothers' enduring wonder, the big dense fellow would rise to that boyhood bait. "Scared? The

I'm scared of any horse ever wore a shoe! Come on, I'll show you! I'll show you!"

"Well, be gentle with him, boys; he may be brittle." As Frank sauntered off around the shed he whistled the latest tune.

In the warmth and light of the kitchen he began to fool with his pretty sister-in-law, feigning princely impatience and growling with a wink at the assembled neighbors, "When do we eat?"

But she protested, "Land, I had everything ready since five, ain't I? And now if it ain't you it's them to wait for. I declare for men!"

At last one of the gossips got in a word.

"What you make of Jim's purchase, Frank?"

"Well, it's Jim's money, Darred. If I had the running of this farm—" Frank began drawing up chairs noisily, leaving it at that.

Darred persisted. "Don't look to me much like an animal for women and children to handle, not yet awhile."

"Cowboys han'les 'em, pa." That was Darred's ten-year-old, big-eyed.

Blossom put the kettle back, protesting, "Leave off, or you'll get me worried to death; all your talk . . . I declare, where *are* those bad boys?" Opening the door she called into the dark, "Jim! Cam! Land's sake!"

Subdued by distance and the intervening sheds, she could hear them at their business—sounds muffled and fragmentary, soft thunder of hoofs, snorts, puffings, and the short words of men in action: "Aw, leave him be in the paddock tonight." . . . "With them mares there, you damn fool?" . . . "Damn fool, eh? Try getting him in at that door and see who's the damn fool?" . . . "Come on, don't be so scared." . . . "Scared, eh? Scared?" . . .

Why was it she always felt that curious tightening of all her powers of attention when Camden Bludge spoke? Probably because he spoke so rarely, and then so roughly, as if his own thick-ness made him mad. Never mind.

"Last call for supper in the dining car, boys!" she called and

closed the door. Turning back to the stove she was about to replace the tea water for the third time when, straightening up, she said, "What's that?"

No one else had heard anything. They looked at one another. "Frank, go—go see what—go tell the boys to come in."

Frank hesitated, feeling foolish, then went to the door.

Then everyone in the room was out of his chair.

There were three sounds. The first was human and incoherent. The second was incoherent too, but it wasn't human. The third was a crash, a ripping and splintering of wood.

When they got to the paddock they found Camden crawling from beneath the wreckage of the fence where a gap was opened on the pasture side. He must have received a blow on the head, for he seemed dazed. He didn't seem to know they were there. At a precarious balance—one hand at the back of his neck—he stood facing up the hill, gaping after the diminuendo of floundering hoofs, invisible above.

So seconds passed. Again the beast gave tongue, a high wild horning note, and on the black of the stony hill to the right of it a faint shower of sparks blew like fireflies where the herding mares wheeled. It seemed to awaken the dazed smith. He opened his mouth: "*Almighty God!*" Swinging, he flung his arms toward the shed. "*There! There!*"

At last someone brought a lantern. They found Jim Bluedge lying on his back in the corner of the paddock near the door to the shed. In the lantern light, and still better in the kitchen when they had carried him in, they read the record of the thing which Camden, dumb in good earnest now, seemed unable to tell them with anything but his strange unfocused stare.

The bloody offense to the skull would have been enough to kill the man, but it was the second, full on the chest above the heart, that told the tale. On the caved grating of the ribs, already turning blue under the yellowish down, the iron shoe had left its mark; and when, laying back the rag of shirt, they saw that the toe of the shoe was upward and the cutting calk-ends down, they knew all they wanted to know of that swift, black, crushing episode.

No outlash here of heels in fright. Here was a forefoot. An

attack aimed and frontal; an onslaught reared, erect; beast turned biped; red eyes mad, to white eyes aghast. . . . And only afterward, when it was done, the blood-fright that serves the horse for conscience; the blind rush across the inclosure; the fence gone down. . . .

No one had much to say. No one seemed to know what to do.

As for Camden, he was no help. He simply stood propped on top of his logs of legs where someone had left him. From the instant when with his "*Almighty God!*" he had been brought back to memory, instead of easing its hold as the minutes passed, the event to which he remained the only living human witness seemed minute by minute to tighten its grip. It set its sweat-beaded stamp on his face, distorted his eyes, and tied his tongue. He was no good to anyone.

As for Blossom, even now—perhaps more than ever now—her dependence on physical touch was the thing that ruled her. Down on her knees beside the lamp they had set on the floor, she plucked at one of the dead man's shoes monotonously, and as it were idly, swaying the toe like an inverted pendulum from side to side. That was all. Not a word. And when Frank, the only one of the three with any sense, got her up finally and led her away to her room, she clung to *him*.

It was lucky that Frank was a man of affairs. His brother was dead, and frightfully dead, but there was tomorrow for grief. Just now there were many things to do. There were people to be gotten rid of. With short words and angry gestures he cleared them out, all but Darred and a man named White, and to these he said, "Now first thing, Jim can't stay here." He ran and got a blanket from a closet. "Give me a hand and we'll lay him in the ice house overnight. Don't sound good, but it's best, poor fellow. Cam, come along!"

He waited a moment, and as he studied the wooden fool the blood poured back into his face. "Wake up, Cam! You great big scared stiff, you!"

Camden brought his eyes out of nothingness and looked at his brother. A twinge passed over his face, convulsing the mouth muscles. "Scared?"

"Yes, you're scared!" Frank's lip lifted, showing the tips of his teeth. "And I'll warrant you something: if you wasn't the scared stiff you was, this hellish thing wouldn't have happened, maybe. Scared! You, a blacksmith! Scared of a horse!"

"*Horse!*" Again that convulsion of the mouth muscles, something between irony and an idiot craft. "Why don't you go catch 'im?"

"Hush it! Don't waste time by going loony now, for God's sake. Come!"

"My advice to anybody—" Camden looked crazier than ever, knotting his brows. "My advice to anybody is to let somebody else go catch that—that—" Opening the door he faced out into the night, his head sunk between his shoulders and the fingers working at the ends of his hanging arms; and before they knew it he began to swear. They could hardly hear because his teeth were locked and his breath soft. There were all the vile words he had ever heard in his life, curses and threats and abominations, vindictive, violent, obscene. He stopped only when at a sharp word from Frank he was made aware that Blossom had come back into the room. Even then he didn't seem to comprehend her return but stood blinking at her, and at the rifle she carried, with his distraught bloodshot eyes.

Frank comprehended. Hysteria had followed the girl's blankness. Stepping between her and the body on the floor, he spoke in a persuasive, unhurried way. "What you doing with that gun, Blossie? Now, now, you don't want that gun, you know you don't."

It worked. Her rigidity lessened appreciably. Confusion gained.

"Well, but—oh, Frank—well, but when we going to shoot him?"

"Yes, yes, Blossie—now, yes—only you best give me that gun; that's the girlie." When he had got the weapon he put an arm around her shoulders. "Yes, yes, course we're going to shoot him; what you think? Don't want an animal like that running round. Now first thing in the morning—"

Hysteria returned. With its strength she resisted his leading.

"No, now! *Now!* He's gone and killed Jim! Killed my hus-

band! I won't have him left alive another minute! I won't! *Now!* No sir, I'm going myself, I am! Frank, I am! *Cam!*"

At his name, appealed to in that queer screeching way, the man in the doorway shivered all over, wet his lips, and walked out into the dark.

"There, you see?" Frank was quick to capitalize anything. "Cam's gone to do it. Cam's gone, Blossie! . . . Here, one of you—Darred, take this gun and run give it to Camden, that's the boy."

"You sure he'll kill him, Frank? You *sure?*"

"Sure as daylight. Now you come along back to your room like a good girl and get some rest. Come, I'll go with you."

When Frank returned to the kitchen ten minutes later, Darred was back.

"Well, now, let's get at it and carry out poor Jim; he can't lay here. . . . Where's Cam gone *now*, damn him!"

"Cam? Why, he's gone and went."

"Went where?"

"Up the pasture, like you said."

"Like I—" Frank went an odd color. He walked to the door. Between the light on the sill and the beginnings of the stars where the woods crowned the mountain was all one blackness. One stillness too. He turned on Darred. "But look, you never gave him that gun, even."

"He didn't want it."

"Lord's sake; what did he say?"

"Said nothing. He'd got the log chain out of the wagon and when I caught him he was up hunting his hammer in under that wreck at the fence. Once he found it he started off up. 'Cam,' says I, 'here's a gun; want it?' He seemed not to. Just went on walking on up."

"How'd he look?"

"Look same's you seen him looking. Sick."

"The damned fool!" . . .

Poor dead Jim! Poor fool Camden! As the storekeeper went about his business and afterward when, the ice house door closed on its tragic tenant and White and Darred gone off home, he

roamed the yard, driven here and there, soft-footed, waiting, hearkening—his mind was for a time not his own property but the plaything of thoughts diverse and wayward. Jim, his brother, so suddenly and so violently gone. The stallion. That beast that had kicked him to death. With anger and hate and pitiless impatience of time he thought of the morrow, when they would catch him and take their revenge with guns and clubs. Behind these speculations, covering the background of his consciousness and stringing his nerves to endless vigil, spread the wall of the mountain: silent from instant to instant but devising under its black silence (who-could-know-what instant to come) a neigh, a yell, a spark-line of iron hoofs on rolling flints, a groan. And still behind that and deeper into the borders of the unconscious, the storekeeper thought of the farm that had lost its master, the rich bottoms, the broad well-stocked pastures, the fat barns, and the comfortable house whose chimneys and gable ends fell into changing shapes of perspective against the stars as he wandered here and there. . . .

Jim gone. . . . And Camden, at any moment . . .

His face grew hot. An impulse carried him a dozen steps. "I ought to go up. Ought to take the gun and go up." But there shrewd sanity put on the brakes. "Where's the use? Couldn't find him in this dark. Besides, I oughtn't to leave Blossom here alone."

With that he went around toward the kitchen, thinking to go in. But the sight of the lantern, left burning out near the sheds, sent his ideas off on another course. At any rate it would give his muscles and nerves something to work on. Taking the lantern and entering the paddock, he fell to patching the gap into the pasture, using broken boards from the wreck. As he worked his eyes chanced to fall on footprints in the dung-mixed earth—Camden's footprints, leading away beyond the little ring of light. And beside them, taking off from the landing place of that prodigious leap, he discerned the trail of the stallion. After a moment he got down on his knees where the earth was softest, holding the lantern so that its light fell full.

He gave over his fence building. Returning to the house his gait was no longer that of the roamer; his face, caught by the periodic flare of the swinging lantern, was the face of another man. In its expression there was a kind of fright and a kind of calculating eagerness. He looked at the clock on the kitchen shelf, shook it, and read it again. He went to the telephone and fumbled at the receiver. He waited till his hand quit shaking, then removed it from the hook.

"Listen, Darrèd," he said, when he had got the farmer at last, "get White and whatever others you can and come over first thing it's light. Come a-riding and bring your guns. No, Cam ain't back."

He heard Blossom calling. Outside her door he passed one hand down over his face, as he might have passed a wash rag, to wipe off what was there. Then he went in.

"What's the matter with Blossie? Can't sleep?"

"No, I can't sleep. Can't think. Can't sleep. Oh, Frankie!" He sat down beside the bed.

"Oh, Frankie, Frankie, *hold my hand!*"

She looked almost homely, her face bleached out and her hair in a mess on the pillow. But she would get over that. And the short sleeve of the nightgown on the arm he held was edged with pretty lace.

"Got your watch here?" he asked. She gave it to him from under the pillow. This too he shook as if he couldn't believe it was going.

Pretty Blossom Beck. Here for a wonder he sat in her bedroom and held her hand. One brother was dead and the other was on the mountain.

But little by little, as he sat and dreamed so, nightmare crept over his brain. He had to arouse and shake himself. He had to set his thoughts resolutely in other roads. . . . Perhaps there would be even the smithy. The smithy, the store, the farm. Complete. The farm, the farmhouse, the room in the farmhouse, the bed in the room, the wife in the bed. Complete beyond belief. If . . . Worth dodging horror for. If . . .

"Frank, has Cam come back?"

"Cam? Don't you worry about Cam. . . . Where's that watch again? . . ."

Far from rounding up their quarry in the early hours after dawn, it took the riders, five of them, till almost noon simply to make certain that he wasn't to be found—not in any of the pastures. Then when they discovered the hole in the fence far up in the woods beyond the crest where Blue Murder had led the mares in a break for the open country of hills and ravines to the south, they were only at the beginning.

The farmers had left their work undone at home and, as the afternoon lengthened and with it the shadows in the hollow places, they began to eye one another behind their leader's back. Yet they couldn't say it; there was something in the storekeeper's air today, something zealous and pitiless and fanatical, that shut them up and pulled them plodding on.

Frank did the trailing. Hopeless of getting anywhere before sundown in that unkempt wilderness of a hundred square miles of scrub, his companions slouched in their saddles and rode more and more mechanically, knee to knee, and it was he who made the casts to recover the lost trail and, dismounting to read the dust, cried back, "He's still with 'em," and with gestures of imperious excitement beckoned them on.

"Which you mean?" Darred asked him once. "Cam, or the horse?"

Frank wheeled his beast and spurred back at the speaker. It was extraordinary. "You don't know what you're talking about!" he cried, with a causelessness and a disordered vehemence which set them first staring, then speculating. "Come on, you dumb-heads; don't talk—*ride!*"

By the following day, when it was being told in all the farm-houses, the story might vary in details and more and more as the tellings multiplied, but in its fundamentals it remained the same. In one thing they certainly all agreed: they used the same expression—"It was like Frank was drove. Drove in a race against something, and not sparing the whip."

They were a good six miles to the south of the fence. Already the road back home would have to be followed three parts in the dark.

Darred was the spokesman. "Frank, I'm going to call it a day."

The others reined up with him but the man ahead rode on. He didn't seem to hear. Darred lifted his voice. "Come on, call it a day, Frank. Tomorrow, maybe. But you see we've run it out and they're not here."

"Wait," said Frank over his shoulder, still riding on into the pocket.

White's mount—a mare—laid back her ears, shied, and stood trembling. After a moment she whinnied.

It was as if she had whinnied for a dozen. A crashing in the woods above them to the left and the avalanche came—downstreaming, erupting, wheeling, wheeling away with volleying snorts, a dark rout.

Darred, reining his horse, began to shout, "Here they go this way, Frank!" But Frank was yelling, "Up here, boys! This way, quick!"

It was the same note, excited, feverish, disordered, breaking like a child's. When they neared him they saw he was off his horse, rifle in hand, and down on his knees to study the ground where the woods began. By the time they reached his animal the impetuous fellow had started up into the cover, his voice trailing, "Come on; spread out and come on!"

One of the farmers got down. When he saw the other three keeping their saddles he swung up again.

White spoke this time. "Be darned if I do!" He lifted a protesting hail, "Come back here, Frank! You're crazy! It's getting dark!"

It was Frank's own fault. They told him plainly to come back and he wouldn't listen.

For a while they could hear his crackle in the mounting underbrush. Then that stopped, whether he had gone too far for their ears or whether he had come to a halt to give his own ears a chance. . . . Once, off to his right, a little higher up under the low ceiling of the trees that darkened moment by moment with the rush of

night, they heard another movement, another restlessness of leaves and stones. Then that was still, and everything was still.

Darred ran a sleeve over his face and swung down. "God alive, boys!"

It was the silence. All agreed there—the silence and the deepening dusk

The first they heard was the shot. No voice. Just the one report. Then after five breaths of another silence a crashing of growth, a charge in the darkness under the withered scrub, continuous and diminishing.

They shouted, "Frank!" No answer. They called, "*Frank Bludge*!"

Now, since they had to, they did. Keeping contact by word, and guided partly by directional memory (and mostly in the end by luck), after a time they found the storekeeper in a brake of ferns, lying across his gun.

They got him down to the open, watching behind them all the while. Only then, by the flares of successive matches, under the noses of the snorting horses, did they look for the damage done.

They remembered the stillness and the gloom; it must have been quite black in there. The attack had come from behind—equine and pantherine at once, and planned and cunning. A deliberate lunge with a forefoot again: the shoe which had crushed the backbone between the shoulder blades was a foreshoe; that much they saw by the match flares in the red wreck.

They took no longer getting home than they had to, but it was longer than they would have wished. With Frank across his own saddle, walking their horses and with one or another ahead to pick the road (it was going to rain, and even the stars were lost), they made no more than a creeping speed.

None of them had much to say on the journey. Finding the break in the boundary fence and feeling through the last of the woods, the lights of their farms began to show in the pool of blackness below, and Darred uttered a part of what had lain in the minds of them all during the return:

"Well, that leaves Cam."

None followed it up. None cared to go any closer than he was to the real question. Something new, alien, menacing and pitiless had come into the valley of their lives with that beast they had never really seen; they felt its oppression, every one, and kept the real question back in their minds: "*Does it leave Cam?*"

It answered itself. Camden was at home when they got there.

He had come in a little before them, empty-handed. Empty-headed too. When Blossom, who had waited all day, part of the time with neighbor women who had come in and part of the time alone to the point of going mad—when she saw him coming down the pasture, his feet stumbling and his shoulders dejected, her first feeling was relief. Her first words, however, were, "Did you get him, Cam?" And all he would answer was, "Gi'me something to eat, can't you? Gi'me a few hours' sleep, can't you? Then wait!"

He looked as if he would need more than a few hours' sleep. Propped on his elbows over his plate, it seemed as though his eyes would close before his mouth would open

His skin was scored by thorns and his shirt was in ribbons under the straps of his iron-sagged apron, but it was not by these marks that his twenty-odd hours showed: it was by his face. While yet his eyes were open and his wits still half awake, his face surrendered. The flesh relaxed into lines of stupor, a putty-formed, putty-colored mask of sleep.

Once he let himself be aroused. This was when, to an abstracted query as to Frank's whereabouts, Blossom told him Frank had been out with four others since dawn. He heaved clear of the table and opened his eyes at her, showing the red around the rims.

He spoke with the thick tongue of a drunkard. "If anybody but me lays hand on that stallion I'll kill him. I'll wring his neck."

Then he relapsed into his stupidity, and not even the arrival of the party bringing his brother's body seemed able to shake him so far clear of it again.

At first, when they had laid Frank on the floor where on the night before they had laid Jim, he seemed hardly to comprehend.

"What's wrong with Frank?"

"Some more of Jim's 'expiriment.' "

"Frank see him? He's scared, Frank is. Look at his face there."

"He's dead, Cam."

"Dead, you say? Frank dead? Dead of fright; is that it?"

Even when, rolling the body over they showed him what was what, he appeared incapable of comprehension, of amazement, of passion, or of any added grief. He looked at them all with a kind of befuddled protest. Returning to his chair and his plate, he grumbled, "Le'me eat first, can't you? Can't you gi'me a little time to sleep?"

"Well, you wouldn't do much tonight anyway, I guess."

At White's words Blossom opened her mouth for the first time.

"No, nothing tonight, Cam. Cam! *Camden!* Say! Promise!"

"And then tomorrow, Cam, what we'll do is to get every last man in the valley, and we'll go at this right. We'll lay hand on that devil—"

Camden swallowed his mouthful of cold steak with difficulty. His obsession touched, he showed them the rims of his eyes again.

"You do and I'll wring your necks. The man that touches that animal before I do gets his neck wrang. That's all you need to remember."

"Yes, yes—no—that is—" Poor Blossom. "Yes, Mr. White, thanks; no, Cam's not going out tonight. . . . No, Cam, nobody's going to interfere—nor nothing. Don't you worry there. . . ."

Again poor Blossom! Disaster piled too swiftly on disaster; no discipline but instinct left. Caught in fire and flood and earthquake and not knowing what to come, and no creed but "save him who can!"—by hook or crook of wile or smile. With the valley of her life emptied out, and its emptiness repeopled monstrously and pressing down black on the roof under which (now that Frank was gone to the ice house too and the farmers back home) one brother was left of three—she would tread softly, she would talk or she would be dumb, as her sidelong glimpses of the awake-asleep man's face above the table told her was the instant's need; or if he

would eat, she would magic out of nothing something, anything; or if he would sleep, he could sleep, so long as he slept in that house where she could know he was sleeping.

Only one thing. If she could touch him. If she could touch and cling.

Lightning filled the windows. After a moment the thunder came avalanching down the pasture and brought up against the clapboards of the house. At this she was behind his chair. She put out a hand. She touched his shoulder. The shoulder was bare, the shirt ripped away, it was caked with sweat and with the blackening smears of scratches, but for all its exhaustion and dirt it was flesh alive—a living man to touch.

Camden blundered up. "What the—" He started off two steps and wheeled on her "Why don't you get off to bed for Goll sake!"

"Yes, Cam, yes—right off, yes."

"Well, *I'm* going, I can tell you. For Goll sake, I need some sleep!"

"Yes, that's right, yes, Cam, good night, Cam—only—only you promise—promise you won't go out—nowheres."

"Go *out*? Not likely I won't! Not *likely*! Get along!"

It took her no time to get along then—quick and quiet as a mouse.

Camden lingered to stand at one of the windows where the lightning came again, throwing the black barns and paddocks at him from the white sweep of the pastures crowned by woods.

As it had taken her no time to go, it took Blossom no time to undress and get in bed. When Camden was on his way to his room, he heard her calling, "Cam! Just a second, Cam!"

In the dark outside her door he drew one hand down over his face, wiping off whatever might be there. Then he entered.

"Yes? What?"

"Cam, set by me a minute, won't you? And Cam, oh Cam, hold my hand."

As he slouched down, his fist inclosing her fingers, thoughts awakened and ran and fastened on things. They fastened, tentatively at first, upon the farm. Jim gone. Frank gone. The

smithy, the store, and the farm. The whole of Mill Crossing. The trinity. The three in one. . . .

"Tight, Cam, for pity's sake! Hold it tight!"

His eyes, falling to his fist, strayed up along the arm it held. The sleeve, rumpled near the shoulder, was trimmed with pretty lace. . . .

"Tighter, Cam!"

A box of apples. That memory hidden away in the cellar of his mind. Hidden away, clamped down in the dark, till the noxious vapors, the murderous vapors of its rotting had filled the shut-up house he was. . . . A box of red apples for the apple-grower's girl . . . the girl who sniggered and ran away from him to laugh at him. . . .

And here, by the unfolding of a devious destiny, he sat in that girl's bedroom, holding that girl's hand. Jim who had got her, Frank who had wanted her, lay side by side out there in the ice house under the lightning. While he, the "dumb one"—the last to be thought of with anything but amusement and the last to be feared—his big hot fist inclosing her imprecating hand now, and his eyes on the pretty lace at her shoulder— He jumped up with a gulp and a clatter of iron.

"What the—" He flung her hand away. "What the—" He swallowed. "Damn you, Blossie Beck!" He stared at her with repugnance and mortal fright. "Why, you—you—you—"

He moderated his voice with an effort, wiping his brow, "Good night. You must excuse me, Blossie; I wasn't meaning—I mean—I hope you sleep good. I shall. . . . Good night!"

In his own brain was the one word, "Hurry!"

She lay and listened to his boots going along the hall and heard the closing of his door. She ought to have put out the lamp. But even with the shades drawn, the lightning around the edges of the window unnerved her; in the dark alone it would have been more than she could bear.

She lay so till she felt herself nearing exhaustion from the sustained rigidity of her limbs. Rain came and with the rain, wind. Around the eaves it neighed like wild stallions; down the chimneys it moaned like men.

Slipping out of bed and pulling on a bathrobe she ran from her room, barefooted, and along the hall to Camden's door.

"Cam!" she called. "Oh, Cam!" she begged. "Please, please!"

And now he wouldn't answer her.

New lightning, diffused through all the sky by the blown rain, ran at her along the corridor. She pushed the door open. The lamp was burning on the bureau but the room was empty and the bed untouched.

Taking the lamp she skittered down to the kitchen. No one there. . . .

"Hurry!"

Camden had reached the woods when the rain came. Lighting the lantern he had brought, he made his way on to the boundary fence. There, about a mile to the east of the path the others had taken that day, he pulled the rails down and tumbled the stones together in a pile. Then he proceeded another hundred yards, holding the lantern high and peering through the streaming crystals of the rain.

Blue Murder was there. Neither the chain nor the sapling had given way. The lantern and, better than the lantern, a globe of lightning, showed the tethered stallion glistening and quivering, his eyes all whites at the man's approach.

"Gentle, boy; steady, boy!" Talking all the while in the way he had with horses, Camden put a hand on the taut chain and bore with a gradually progressive weight, bringing the dark head nearer. "Steady, boy; gentle there, damn you; gentle!"

Was he afraid of horses? Who was it said he was afraid of horses?

The beast's head was against the man's chest, held there by an arm thrown over the bowed neck. As he smoothed the forehead and fingered the nose with false caresses, Camden's "horse talk" ran on—the cadence one thing, the words another.

"Steady, Goll damn you; you're going to get yours. Cheer up, cheer up, the worst is yet to come. Come now! Come easy! Come along!"

When he had unloosed the chain, he felt for and found with his free hand his hammer hidden behind the tree. Throwing the lantern into the brush, where it flared for an instant before dying, he led the stallion back as far as the break he had made in the fence. Taking a turn with the chain around the animal's nose, like an improvised hackamore, he swung from the stone pile to the slippery back. A moment's shying, a sliding caracole of amazement and distrust, a crushing of knees, a lash of the chain end, and that was all there was to that. Blue Murder had been ridden before. . . .

In the smithy, chambered in the roaring of the falls and the swish and shock of the storm, Camden sang as he pumped his bellows, filling the cave beneath the rafters with red. The air was nothing, the words were mumbo-jumbo, but they swelled his chest. His eyes, cast from time to time at his wheeling prisoner, had lost their look of helplessness and surly distraction.

Scared? He? No, no, no! Now that he wasn't any longer afraid of time, he wasn't afraid of anything on earth.

"Shy, you devil!" He wagged his exalted head. "Whicker, you hellion! Whicker all you want to, stud horse! Tomorrow they're going to get you, the numb fools! Tomorrow they can have you. *I got you tonight!*"

He was more than other men; he was enormous. Fishing an iron shoe from that inseparable apron pocket of his, he thrust it into the coals and blew and blew. He tried it and it was burning red. He tried it again and it was searing white. Taking it out on the anvil he began to beat it, swinging his hammer one-handed, gigantic. So in the crimson light, irradiating iron sparks, he was at his greatest. Pounding, pounding. A man in the dark of night with a hammer about him can do wonders; with a horseshoe about him he can cover up a sin. And if the dark of night in a paddock won't hold it, then the dark of undergrowth on a mountain side will. . . .

Pounding, pounding; thinking, thinking, in a great halo of hot stars. Feeding his hungry, his insatiable muscles.

"Steady now, you blue Steady, boy!"

What he did not realize in his feverish exaltation was that his

muscles were not insatiable. In the thirty-odd hours past they had had a feast spread before them and they had had their fill. . . . More than their fill.

As with the scorching iron in his tongs he approached the stallion, he had to step over the nail box he had stepped over five thousand times in the routine of every day.

A box of apples, eh? Apples to snigger at, eh? But whose girl are you now? . . . Scared, eh?

His foot was heavier of a sudden than it should have been. This five thousand and first time, by the drag of the tenth of an inch, the heel caught the lip of the nail box.

He tried to save himself from stumbling. At the same time, instinctively, he held the iron flame in his tongs away.

There was a scream out of a horse's throat; a whiff of hair and burnt flesh.

There was a lash of something in the red shadows. There was another sound and another wisp of stench. . . .

When, guided by the stallion's whinnying, they found the smith next day, they saw by the cant of his head that his neck was broken, and they perceived that he too had on him the mark of a shoe. It lay up one side of his throat and the broad of a cheek. It wasn't blue this time, however—it was red. It took them some instants in the sunshine pouring through the wide door to comprehend this phenomenon. It wasn't sunk in by a blow this time; it was burned in, a brand.

Darred called them to look at the stallion, chained behind the forge.

"Almighty God!" The words sounded funny in his mouth. They sounded the funnier in that they were the same ones the blundering smith had uttered when, staring uphill from his clever wreckage of the paddock fence, he had seen the mares striking sparks from the stones where the stallion struck none. And he, of all men, a smith!

"Almighty God!" called Darred. "What you make of these here feet?"

One fore hoof was freshly pared for shoeing; the other three

hoofs were as virgin as any yearling's on the plains. Blue Murder had never yet been shod. . . .

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Does this story meet the first test of a surprise ending (see page 30)? At what point in the story did you discover that Blue Murder was *not* the murderer of Jim and of Frank?

2. Re-read the story to satisfy yourself that the author played fair with the reader. Find the hints which would have led the reader to the truth, had he been alert enough. (I have yet to find such a reader.) Specifically, find the answers to these questions:

- a. Why did Camden hate his brothers?
- b. How did the horse's name and reputation suggest to Camden the means of gaining revenge?
- c. How did the horse escape from the paddock?
- d. Why did Camden seem so shocked as he watched the dark mountain side?
- e. Why did Camden go out after Blue Murder, and threaten to kill anyone else who did?
- f. When did Frank discover that Camden, and not Blue Murder, was the killer?
- g. Why did Frank want to find Blue Murder?
- h. Why did Camden kill Frank?
- i. What was Camden planning to do to Blue Murder in the smithy?

3. Name some of the things that led us to wrong conclusions, but which, had we read the story perfectly, would not have succeeded in doing so; *e. g.*, Blue Murder's name and "reputation" made us jump to the conclusion that he had killed Jim. Show that each of these served some purpose other than to mislead the reader.

4. Use the dictionary for: coquetry, pique, skepticism, indulgently, ludicrous, cogitations, feigning, zealous, equine, noxious, devious, imprecating, cadence, caracole, insatiable, cant.

FOR YOUR VOCABULARY

Since "Blue Murder" is about a horse, we naturally find in it the word *equine*, meaning "like a horse." This word is based upon *equus*, the Latin word for "horse." Other words derived from Latin words for various animals are: *aquiline*, *bovine*, *canine*, *feline*, *vulpine*, *leonine*, *porcine*, *lupine*, *serpentine*, *asinine*, *anserine*. What is the meaning of each of these words?

SOMETHING TO DO

Write the concluding paragraphs of a story. Have in your mind a clear understanding of the central impression the story should give. So that the reader may understand this final scene, first write in a few sentences a brief statement of the events in the story leading up to the climax. Then plunge at once into the climax scene. Avoid a long conclusion; when you are through, stop. Make the last sentence count in stressing the central impression.

FOR FURTHER READING

Wilbur Daniel Steele won so many prizes in the early 1920's for his short stories that the editors of the *O. Henry Prize Stories* gave him a special award for sustained excellence and declared him ineligible for further prizes! However, this decision was later reconsidered, and he won first prizes in 1925, 1926, and 1931. He combined Poe's love of horror and O. Henry's mastery of the surprise ending with a skill and artistry unmatched in his time. You will find further examples of this skill in "White Horse Winter," "Footfalls," "Luck," "The Yellow Cat," or "For They Know Not What They Do."

A GROUP OF SHORT SHORTS

THE SHORT SHORT

THE stories which follow are examples of a special story form known as the short short, which is scarcely a generation old. Stephen Leacock, the great Canadian humorist, made fun of this form: "Among the latest follies in fiction is the perpetual demand for stories shorter and shorter still. The only thing to do is to meet this demand at the source and check it. The story below, if left to soak overnight in a barrel of rainwater, will swell to the dimensions of a dollar-fifty novel." Then follows a story just 28 lines long, which Leacock calls "An Irreducible Detective Story"—a satire on detective stories and on short shorts at the same time.

Now it must be admitted that many of the short shorts written for our popular magazines are inferior in quality. They are written to meet rigid requirements of length (140 lines of type-script); and some editors issue precise formulas: "First sentence starts situation. Second sentence furthers situation and introduces chief character. Chief character's personality and attitude toward situation must be completely established by end of 17th line . . .," etc. Thus too often the short short becomes an artificial plot-story without honesty or realism, and devoid of the breath of life. But the amazing truth is that many of the short shorts turn out very well indeed, as you may see for yourself if you follow them in the *American Magazine*, or *Liberty*, or *Collier's*. Indeed, considering the strict limitation of space, the authors turn in a very worthy performance, and now and then achieve a masterpiece.

I now give you four of the best magazine short shorts out of a great many that I have read. These stories are chosen not only for their quality, but also as examples of the kind and length of story you may hope to write yourself. Through the pages of this book there have been various exercises on the

different parts of short-story structure. Now that you have had practice with each part, it is time to try to achieve a finished product. As you read the following short shorts, keep in mind that you are about to become the author of a story comparable in length and kind—and, I hope, in quality—to one of these.

THE BEAU CATCHER

Frederick Laing

"The Beau Catcher" tempts me to yield once more to superlatives. It is a brilliant example of what can be done in 1200 words: "Great riches in a little room." In many respects it is a pattern story: it follows the formula as to rate of development of the situation, introduction of main character, location of climax, length of conclusion. But in the convincing reality of the characters, in the skill with which an honest lesson of life has been woven into the rather mechanical pattern of the short short, it has seldom been equaled. Read it for plot and for theme.

WHAT had really brought her into Waller's department store was something definitely not romantic. She had promised her mother to get herself a pair of rubbers. As she wandered through she was looking wistfully at the things she couldn't afford or wouldn't be allowed to wear. That two-piece bathing suit, for instance. Renee Weston had one like it. . . .

Renee Weston, yes . . . whom Bert Howland was taking to the benefit dance this Saturday, this very night. And as for herself, who had asked her to go to the benefit dance at the country club? Why, nobody. For who was going to ask bashful Genevieve Smith?

She was walking along the aisles with her head down and her heart, to judge from the way she felt, dragging on the floor behind her. It was the sign in front of these hair ribbons that stopped her cold.

BEAU CATCHERS, it said.

And around the sign was a selection of those bow ribbons for your hair. Every color of the rainbow, it said—pick a color to suit your personality.

She stood there a moment with her head down. No, her mother wouldn't let her wear a bow that big and showy, even if she had the nerve, which she hadn't. These beau catchers, they were the kind . . .

The kind Renee Weston would wear, she had started to think, when the saleslady broke into her train of thought: "This would be a nice one for you, dearie."

"Oh, no, I'm afraid I couldn't wear anything like that," she answered. But at the same time she was reaching wistfully for the green ribbon.

The saleslady looked surprised. "With that lovely copper-colored hair and those pretty eyes? Why, child, you could wear anything."

Maybe it was only a sales talk, but the ribbon was attached to a comb, and because she didn't need much urging, she fastened it into her hair.

"No, a little farther front," the saleslady said. "One thing you have to remember, honey, if you're going to wear anything a little out of the ordinary, wear it like nobody had a better right than you. In this world, you gotta hold your head up." She looked at the position of the ribbon critically. "That's better. Why, you look positively . . . exciting."

She looked in the mirror and, sure enough, the green color of the ribbon and the hint of red in her hair with the green of her eyes . . .

"I'll take it," she said, a little surprised at the note of decision in her voice.

"Now if you wanted to get another for formal wear," the saleslady said, "one like this, for instance, if you were going to a party or a dance . . ."

It was the last thing she wanted to talk about. She paid for the ribbon and started to get out of there so fast that she bumped smack into a big woman with a lot of packages, and almost got knocked silly.

As she neared the door, a funny old man was staring at her. A man with black eyes and a droopy gray mustache under a green fedora hat. You could tell from his eyes that he was smiling

under the gray mustache. Smiling and looking at the beau catcher.

It was a conquest, even if it wasn't much. She gave him a glance. Just the merest passing look, but . . .

But the next moment a shiver of fright went through her, for the silly old thing was actually following her. That beau catcher couldn't . . . but this was really dreadful. She started to look around and then she heard him say, "Hey, keedo!" She ran like a rabbit and didn't stop running until she was a block down the street.

Then suddenly she found herself in front of Carson's drugstore and she knew for sure it was where she'd been intending to go from the start. Because practically any girl in town knew this was the drugstore where Bert Howland hung around Saturday afternoons, talking with his friends or playing the pinball machine.

She hesitated just a moment before she entered the drugstore. Then she took a deep breath.

He was there all right. He was sitting at the soda counter, and the minute she saw him—the way he was hunched over a cup of coffee, not drinking it, just looking ahead—she thought, Renee turned him down. She's going to the dance with somebody else.

She sat down at the other corner of the counter facing his profile, and Harry, the soda jerk, came over to take her order.

"Bring me a black and white soda," she said.

And as he went to get her the soda, she saw, out of the side of her eyelashes, that Bert Howland had turned and was staring at her.

She sat up straight, holding her head high, conscious, very conscious of that green beau catcher.

After a while he said, "Hi, Genevieve."

She turned, and did a neat little job there of looking surprised. "Why, Bert Howland," she said, "how long have you been sitting here?"

"All my life," he said. "Just waiting for you."

It was only a line, but ordinarily it would have left her stuttering. She wanted to reach up and make a few touches at her hair, just to feel the beau catcher to give her confidence, but she restrained herself.

"Flatterer," she said.

And a moment later, he was sitting on the stool beside her, looking at her in that same way, as though he'd just noticed she was alive.

"Wearing your hair a different way or something, aren't you?" he asked

She reached for her soda and took a gulp. "Do you usually notice things like that?" she asked.

"No," he said. "I guess it's just the way you're holding your head up. Like you thought I ought to notice something."

She felt a slight flush at her cheeks and the tips of her ears. "Is that meant as a crack?"

"Maybe," he said, grinning, "and maybe not. Maybe I sort of like to see you hold your head like that."

It was about ten minutes afterward that the unbelievable happened. He said, "You know, they're having a dance at the country club tonight."

And when he actually came across with it, the invitation and everything, it was all she could do to keep from throwing her arms around him.

They left the drugstore a little later, and he offered to walk home with her. But suddenly she remembered that formal beau catcher, the one you wore to a party or a dance. She couldn't wear the one she had on. She would have to have one to match her evening dress. And so, though only this morning she would have practically wept for joy at the chance to have Bert Howland walk home with her, she told him now that she simply had to get to Waller's before it closed.

She got there just as the doors were being shut. A man tried to keep her out, but she brushed past him and dashed to the ribbon counter.

She looked for the blue-and-gold one. Gone! If they didn't have another . . .

The saleslady smiled when she saw who it was. "I knew you'd be back."

"H . . . how?" she asked, out of breath.

The saleslady reached under the counter. "I've been saving it

for you." But the beau catcher she brought out was not the blue-and-gold one. It wasn't even formal at all. In fact, it was . . .

"That's like the one I just bought," she said, puzzled.

And then she was standing with her mouth opened in amazement. Why, when the big woman had bumped into her it must have been knocked off. . . .

"It *is* the same one," the saleslady explained.

And with that knowledge a lot of things began to flash through Genevieve's mind. But suddenly she began to smile and then somehow she couldn't stop smiling. She let her head lift easily while half of her listened to the saleslady's story—a story about a man who had found his way to the ribbon counter with her beau catcher, a jolly old man in a green fedora hat.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. I did not mention the surprise ending in the headnote, because I wanted the story to have a fair chance. Were you surprised? How well does the ending pass the tests for a good surprise ending?

2. One of the structural problems the author faced was to contrive a meeting between Genevieve and Bert Howland. He solved it by saying that Bert "hangs out" at the drugstore on Saturday afternoons; then he sent Genevieve there to find Bert. But this arrangement may discredit Bert in the eyes of some readers as a "drugstore loafer." How could the meeting have been contrived to avoid this reaction?

3. One formula for short shorts says all characters must be introduced in the first 25 lines. Defend the later appearance of the little man in the green fedora hat.

4. State in your own words the theme of this story, or find a statement of it by one of the minor characters. Do you believe this theme? How can you judge the truth of themes?

5. Use the dictionary for: wistfully, fedora, profile.

LAST TIME AROUND

Pat Frank

This baseball story, told with a considerable sprinkling of baseball slang, is typical of the better short shorts in our popular magazines.

BABCOCK, the manager, picked up the third-string catcher with his eyes, and nodded him in to pinch-hit. Whipple took a deep breath, got up off the bench with his bat in his hand, and said, "I want my last bats." The third-string catcher hesitated, and then sat down. Whipple knew they were all watching him. They seemed to be staring at their feet, which is the way of a team behind by six runs in the ninth, but they were watching him. They were thinking, "What's he want his bats for? Won't do him any good."

Babcock scratched his leg and said, "All right, Wiz, take your last bats." But Babcock's face reddened and you could see his neck veins swelling, as they did when he was angry.

Whipple walked to the plate slowly, a medium-sized, nicely constructed man with his cap pulled down well over the back of his head so the gray wouldn't show. From an upper box over first base a jockey let loose, "Whipple, where's your wheelchair?"

He took a long time, dusting his bat handle with resin. The same jockey yelled through cupped fingers, "Old Wheezing Whipple!" Sound cascaded out of the stands. When ten thousand people laugh all at once, nothing is funny. Nothing is funny, anyway, when you've got a wife, and four kids in school, and you're buying a big house, and you've just been unconditionally released.

He stepped into the batter's box, and glanced toward the dugout for instructions. Babcock didn't bother to give him a signal. The jockey shrilled, "Come on, Wheezing, we wanna go home!"

The Lions' young pitcher juggled the ball and stared through the box. He was loose and unworried. He'd struck out Whipple twice. Fifteen, or ten, or even five years ago that would have been something for a young pitcher. Now it was routine. Whipple wasn't batting his weight.

The first one came over, very fast and inside, and he went into the dust. Bolles, the Lions' catcher, said, "Well, we almost got the old Wizard of third base."

"That's right," said Whipple, picking himself up, unperturbed. "Guys have got killed, not getting out of the way of bean balls. Plenty of 'em."

"Yeah?" inquired Bolles.

"Sure. I'll show you the records sometime."

The next one was fast, shoulder high and over. To Whipple it was only a thin gray streak. First a man's legs went, and then his wrists, and finally his eyes. "That one would kill you," Whipple said, "if it hit your temple."

"One almost got me last week in Boston," Bolles said.

"You can't help getting hit," said Whipple pleasantly, "but there are certain precautions. . . ."

He didn't swing at two curves, and was thankful, for they were outside. He watched another strike, and then set himself. This was it. This was the important pitch. It came roaring down on the plate. He started to swing, but was too late. "Ball four," growled the umpire with belligerent uncertainty. Bolles took off his mask and threw it into the dust and swore. Whipple trotted to first base.

"Hello, Hap," he said to Lodski, planting his foot on the bag.

"I hear you're leavin'," Lodski said.

"We all get old. How old are you, Hap?"

"Thirty-four."

"Bet you haven't saved a nickel."

The jockey in the upper box screamed, "Don't let that old man give you any lip, Hap!"

Whipple stepped off first far enough to draw a throw. "I wouldn't have started the season," he told Lodski, "except for the war taking our young kids. After the war's over, a lot of young

ones will be coming along. Hundreds of 'em. They teach 'em baseball in the camps."

"That's right," Lodski said gloomily.

"How about having dinner with me tonight? The Carlton. Eight o'clock?"

"Sure," Lodski said, and then the next man in the lineup hit a bounding ball to deep short, and Whipple strained to get to second base. He sensed a try for a double play, and went into second viciously, legs high and stiff, and felt his spikes ripping flannel. Cummings, the Lions' second baseman, dropped the ball and came up red-faced and cursing, his fists doubled.

"What're you trying to do, ruin me?" Cummings shouted.

"Sorry," said Whipple. "Didn't mean to make it that close."

Cummings' mouth hung open. This was the first time in his career as a second baseman that anyone had ever apologized to him for anything.

"I understand how it is," Whipple went on. "I've got a wife and kids at home, too."

"Yeah?" Cummings said incredulously, examining the rip in his pants.

"Yes, and I've often wondered what would happen if I got spiked bad. I've known second basemen who were laid up for six months. Some never come back. Cut tendons."

The jockey over first base cried, "Murderer—that's what he is—murderer!"

The next man sacrificed, and Whipple got to third. "Well," remarked Flaherty, the third baseman, "never expected to see you here."

"It's a surprise to me, too," Whipple admitted.

"I hear they released you today. Must be pretty tough in this racket, when a guy gets to be forty."

"That's right," Whipple said. "It's good to see young fellows, like you, thinking of your future. I didn't have that much sense when I was your age. My case should be a lesson . . ."

Flaherty crept close to the bag, as if he expected a throw. "Don't give me that stuff," he said. "You've been playing with your head for five years now. I'll bet you've got plenty saved."

"I'll tell you all about it," said Whipple, "later."

He took a long lead, much too long for a man with the spring gone from his legs, and the pitcher whirled and threw to third. Instead of diving back for the bag, Whipple tried for the plate. Flaherty's throw was wild, and he scored.

"Well," said Bolles, the catcher, "all you guys have to do is make five more runs and you'll tie it up."

"Remember what I was talking about?" said Whipple, brushing the dust from his shirt. "Remember what I said about getting beamed?"

"Sure."

"I'd like to show you those records. See you at Feeney's after it's over."

"Okay," Bolles agreed, pushing back his mask and scratching his head.

Whipple limped to the dugout, and sat down on the bench, and wiped his face with a towel. "Pretty lucky, your last time around," Babcock remarked.

"Could be "

"That release still stands. I'd give you a job as a coach, except I don't like anybody around thinks he's smarter than me."

"I've got a job," Whipple said.

"Maybe the Lions will take you. You beefed enough to them, going around the bases." Babcock's face was reddening again.

"No," Whipple remarked, appraising the manager. "No, I'm selling insurance. I just started today—and think I have a few prospects. But I'm not trying to sell you, because you're a bad risk." Whipple rose and walked toward the dressing room. He noticed that Babcock's neck veins were swelling again.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Short shorts, having little space for development of character or setting, necessarily concentrate on plot. Therefore most of them have surprise endings. What did you think of the surprise ending in this story? Were you surprised? Show how the ending was well prepared for.

2. What contribution is made to the story by the jockey in the upper box?

3. What purpose is served by the use of baseball slang? If there are any terms which you do not understand, have some baseball fan in the class explain them to you.

SIN

Agnes Repplier

Although hardly more than a slight episode in a little girl's life, "Sin" is included in this collection of short stories because it reveals so clearly and directly several basic truths of human nature. Furthermore, the story takes us into a convent school in Philadelphia and shows us briefly a type of life with which some of us have had no contact.

I was twelve years old, and very happy in my convent school. I did not particularly mind studying my lessons, and I sometimes persuaded the less experienced nuns to accept a retentive memory as a substitute for intelligent understanding, with which it has nothing to do. I "got along" with other children, and I enjoyed my friends; and of such simple things is the life of a child composed.

Then came a disturbing letter from my mother, a letter which threatened the heart of my content. It was sensible and reasonable, and it said very plainly and very kindly that I had better not make an especial friend of Lilly Milton; "not an exclusive friend," wrote my mother, "not one whom you would expect to see intimately after you leave school."

I knew what all that meant. I was as innocent as a kitten; but divorces were not common in those conservative years, and Mrs. Milton had as many to her credit as if she were living—a highly esteemed and popular lady—today. I regretted my mother's tendency to confuse issues with unimportant details (a mistake which grown-up people often made), and I felt sure that if she knew Lilly—who was also as innocent as a kitten, and was blessed with the sweetest temper that God ever gave a little girl—she would be

delighted that I had such an excellent friend. So I went on happily enough until ten days later, when Madame Rayburn, a nun for whom I cherished a very warm affection, was talking to me upon a familiar theme—the diverse ways in which I might improve my classwork and my general behavior. The subject did not interest me deeply,—repetition had staled its vivacity,—until my companion said the one thing that had plainly been uppermost in her mind: “And Agnes, how did you come to tell Lilly Milton that your mother did not want you to go with her? I never thought you could have been so deliberately unkind.”

This brought me to my feet with a bound. “Tell Lilly!” I cried. “You could not have believed such a thing. It was Madame Bouron who told her.”

A silence followed this revelation. The convent discipline was as strict for the nuns as for the pupils, and it was not their custom to criticize their superiors. Madame Bouron was mistress general, ranking next to the august head, and of infinitely more importance to us. She was a cold, severe, sardonic woman, and the general dislike felt for her had shaped itself into a cult. I had accepted this cult in simple good faith, having no personal grudge until she did this dreadful thing; and I may add that it was the eminently unwise custom of reading all the letters written to or by the pupils which stood responsible for the trouble. The order of nuns was a French one, and the habit of surveillance, which did not seem amiss in France, was ill-adapted to America. I had never before wasted a thought upon it. My weekly home letter and the less frequent but more communicative epistles from my mother might have been read in the market place for all I cared, until this miserable episode proved that a bad usage may be trusted to produce, sooner or later, bad results.

It was with visible reluctance that Madame Rayburn said after a long pause: “That alters the case. If Madame Bouron told Lilly, she must have had some good reason for doing so.”

“There was no good reason,” I protested. “There couldn’t have been. But it doesn’t matter. I told Lilly it wasn’t so, and she believed me.”

Madame Rayburn stared at me aghast. "You told Lilly it was not so?" she repeated.

I nodded. "I could not find out for two days what was the matter," I explained; "but I got it out of her at last, and I told her that my mother had never written a line to me about her. And she believed me."

"But my dear child," said the nun, "you have told a very grievous lie. What is more, you have borne false witness against your neighbor. When you said to Lilly that your mother had not written that letter, you made her believe that Madame Bouron had lied to her."

"She didn't mind believing that," I observed cheerfully, "and there was nothing else that I could say to make her feel all right."

"But a lie is a lie," protested the nun. "You will have to tell Lilly the truth."

I said nothing, but my silence was not the silence of acquiescence. Madame Rayburn must have recognized this fact, for she took another line of attack. When she spoke next, it was in a low voice and very earnestly. "Listen to me," she said. "Friday is the first of May. You are going to confession on Thursday. You will tell Father O'Harra the whole story just as you have told it to me, and whatever he bids you do, you must do it. Remember that if you go to confession and do not tell this you will commit the very great sin of sacrilege; and if you do not obey your confessor you will commit the sin of open disobedience to the Church."

I was more than a little frightened. It seemed to me that for the first time in my life I was confronted by grown-up iniquities to which I had been a stranger. The thought sobered me for two days. On the third I went to confession, and when I had finished with my customary offenses—which, as they seldom varied, were probably as familiar to the priest as they were to me—I told my serious tale. The silence with which it was received bore witness to its seriousness. No question was asked me; I had been too explicit to render questions needful. But after two minutes (which seemed like two hours) of thinking my confessor said: "A lie is a lie. It must be retracted. Tomorrow you will do one of two

things. You will tell your friend the truth, or you will tell Madame Bouron the whole story just as you told it to me. Do you understand?"

"Yes," I said in a faint little voice, no louder than a sigh.

"And you will do as I bid you?"

"Yes," I breathed again.

"Then I will give you absolution, and you may go to Communion. But remember, no later than tomorrow. Believe me, it will get no easier by delay."

Of that I felt tolerably sure, and it was with the courage of desperation that I knocked the next morning at the door of Madame Bouron's office. She gave me a glance of wonderment (I had never before paid her a voluntary call), and without pause or preamble I told my tale, told it with such bald uncompromising verity that it sounded worse than ever. She listened at first in amazement, then in anger. "So Lilly thinks I lied to her," she said at last.

"Yes," I answered.

"And suppose I send for her now and undeceive her."

"You can't do that," I said. "I should tell her again my mother did not write the letter, and she would believe me."

"If you told another such lie, you would be sent from the school."

"If I were sent home, Lilly would believe me. She would believe me all the more."

The anger died out of Madame Bouron's eyes, and a look of bewilderment came into them. I am disposed to think that, despite her wide experience as nun and teacher, she had never before encountered an *idée fixe*,¹ and found out that the pyramids are flexible compared to it. "You know," she said uncertainly, "that sooner or later you will have to do as your mother desires."

I made no answer. The "sooner or later" did not interest me at all. I was living now.

There was another long pause. When Madame Bouron spoke again it was in a grave and low voice. "I wish I had said nothing about your mother's letter," she said. "I thought I could settle

¹ *idée fixe* (ē' dā' fēks') [F] · a fixed idea; an idea which cannot be driven out of the mind.

matters quickly that way, but I was mistaken, and I must take the consequences of my error. You may go now. I will not speak to Lilly, or to anyone else about this affair."

I did not go. I sat stunned, and asking myself if she knew all that her silence would imply. Children seldom give adults much credit for intelligence. "But," I began feebly—

"But me no buts," she interrupted, rising to her feet. "I know what you are going to say; but I have not been the head of a school for years without bearing more than one injustice."

Now when I heard these words sadly spoken something broke up inside of me. It did not break gently, like the dissolving of a cloud; it broke like the bursting of a dam. Sobs shook my lean little body as though they would have torn it apart. Tears blinded me. With difficulty I gasped out three words. "You are good," I said.

Madame Bouron propelled me gently to the door, which I could not see because of my tears. "I wish I could say as much for you," she answered, "but I cannot. You have been very bad. You have been false to your mother, to whom you owe respect and obedience; you have been false to me; and you have been false to God. But you have been true to your friend."

She put me out of the door, and I stood in the corridor facing the clock. I was still shaken by sobs, but my heart was light as a bird. And, believe it or not, the supreme reason for my happiness was—not that my difficulties were over, though I was glad of that; and not that Lilly was safe from hurt, though I was glad of that; but that Madame Bouron, whom I had thought bad, had proved herself to be, according to the standards of childhood, as good as gold. My joy was like the joy of the blessed saints in Paradise.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Select and discuss several of the author's comments on human nature, such as "my mother's tendency to confuse issues with unimportant details (a mistake which grown-up people often made)."

2. What admirable quality made the little girl willing even to be dismissed from school?

3. "Sin" describes an unusual case of discipline. Did you feel that the people involved handled the situation well, or badly?

4. Discuss the value of such a rigid moral generalization as the priest's, "A lie is a lie."

5. Use the dictionary for: vivacity, sardonic, eminently, surveillance, acquiescence, iniquities, verity.

BILL'S LITTLE GIRL

Zona Gale

One of the most interesting things about "Bill's Little Girl" is the story of how it came to be written. Zona Gale says:

"The City Editor of the New York *Evening World* once handed me a cutting from the want advertisements of that day's *Morning World*. 'Go and find what lies back of that,' he said.

"The advertisement was that one which I have included in the story of Bill. His story is rather like that of the man who had advertised.

"I do not recall this man's name. I never saw him again. But I still have his photograph, with that of the little girl."

Bill must have had a terrific struggle with himself, but there is never any doubt about the outcome. There is no surprise in the ending—only heartbreak.

BILL was thirty when his wife died, and little Minna was four. Bill's carpenter shop was in the yard of his house, so he thought that he could keep up his home for Minna and himself. All day while he worked at his bench, she played in the yard, and when he was obliged to be absent for a few hours, the woman next door looked after her. Bill could cook a little, coffee and bacon and fried potatoes and flapjacks, and he found bananas and sardines and crackers useful. When the woman next door said this was not the diet for four-year olds, he asked her to teach him to cook oat-meal and vegetables, and though he always burned the dishes in which he cooked these things, he cooked them every day. He swept, all but the corners, and he dusted, dabbed at every object; and he complained that after he had cleaned the windows he could not see out as well as he could before. He washed and patched Minna's little garments and mended her doll. He found a kitten

for her so that she wouldn't be lonely. At night he heard her say her prayer; he either woke her up, or else he made her say it the first thing next morning. He himself used to try to pray: "Lord, make me do right by her if you see me doing wrong." On Sundays he took her to church and sat listening with his head on one side, trying to understand, and giving Minna peppermints when she rustled. He stopped work for a day and took her to the Sunday school picnic. "Her mother would of," he explained. When Minna was old enough to go to kindergarten, Bill used to take her morning or afternoon, and he would call for her. Once he dressed himself in his best clothes and went to visit the school. "I think her mother would of," he told the teacher, diffidently. But he could make little of the colored paper and the designs and the games, and he did not go again. "There's some things I can't be any help to her with," he thought.

Minna was six when Bill fell ill. On a May afternoon he went to a doctor. When he came home he sat in his shop for a long time and did nothing. The sun was beaming through the window in bright squares. He was not going to get well. It might be that he had six months. . . . He could hear Minna singing to her doll.

When she came to kiss him that night, he made an excuse, for he must never kiss her now. He held her at arm's length, looked in her eyes, said: "Minna's a big girl now. She doesn't want papa to kiss her." But her lip curled and she turned away sorrowful, so the next day Bill went to another doctor to make sure. The other doctor made him sure.

He tried to think what to do. He had a sister in Nebraska, but she was a tired woman. His wife had a brother in the city, but he was a man of many words. And little Minna . . . there were things known to her which he himself did not know—matters of fairies and the words of songs. He wished that he could hear of somebody who would understand her. And he had only six months. . . .

Then the woman next door told him bluntly that he ought not to have the child there, and him coughing as he was; and he knew that his decision was already upon him.

One whole night he thought. Then he advertised in a city paper:

A man with a few months to live would like nice people to adopt his little girl, six, blue eyes, curls. References required.

They came in a limousine, as he had hoped that they would come. Their clothes were as he had hoped. They had with them a little girl who cried: "Is this my little sister?" On which the woman in the smart frock said sharply:

"Now then, you do as mama tells you and keep out of this or we'll leave you here and take this darling little girl away with us."

So Bill looked at this woman and said steadily that he had now other plans for his little girl. He watched the great blue car roll away. "For the land sake!" said the woman next door when she heard. "You done her out of a fortune. You hadn't the right—a man in your health." And when other cars came, and he let them go, this woman told her husband that Bill ought most certainly to be reported to the authorities.

The man and woman who walked into Bill's shop one morning were still mourning their own little girl. The woman was not sad—only sorrowful, and the man, who was tender of her, was a carpenter. In a blooming of his hope and his dread, Bill said to them: "You're the ones." When they asked: "How long before we can have her?" Bill said: "One day more."

That day he spent in the shop. It was summer and Minna was playing in the yard. He could hear the words of her songs. He cooked their supper and while she ate, he watched. When he had tucked her in her bed, he stood in the dark hearing her breathing. "I'm a little girl tonight—kiss me," she had said, but he shook his head. "A big girl, a big girl," he told her.

When they came for her the next morning he had her ready and her little garments were ready, washed and mended, and he had mended her doll. "Minna's never been for a visit!" he told her buoyantly. And when she ran toward him, "A big girl, a big girl," he reminded her.

He stood and watched the man and woman walking down the

street with Minna between them. They had brought her a little blue parasol in case the parting should be hard. This parasol Minna held bobbing above her head, and she was so absorbed in looking up at the blue silk that she did not remember to turn and wave her hand.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Give specific names to the two forces struggling against each other in this story.

2. Characterize Bill in your own words.

3. Why did he turn away the people who came in the blue limousine?

4. A most remarkable feature of this story is its stern restraint: the author sets down the bare facts, in the fewest possible words, without comment. Evidently she feels the facts are strong enough to speak for themselves. For instance: "Bill went to another doctor to make sure. The other doctor made him sure." Find other examples of this restraint. Does it seem to you to add to, or detract from, the strength and the beauty of the story?

5. What is the purpose of the last sentence in the second paragraph: "He could hear Minna singing to her doll"?

6. Use the dictionary for: diffidently, limousine, buoyantly.

FOR YOUR VOCABULARY

In writing a story of your own, you will need to use many words to help the reader understand the manner in which people say things and do things. Zona Gale used several adverbs of manner to describe remarks: *diffidently*, *bluntly*, *steadily*, *severely*. Look up the meaning of these words and notice how they help to characterize the speakers.

In "Last Time Around" adjectives help characterize the actors in the story. The young pitcher was *loose* and *unworried*. Whipple picked himself up, *unperturbed*. The umpire was *belligerent* as he gave his decisions. What impression of these men is given by these words?

FOR FURTHER READING: SHORT SHORTS

Sally Benson Tenth of the Month
Richard Connell One Man's Task

Frances Frost	The Heart Being Perished
Katherine Peabody Girling	When Hannah Var Eight Yar Old
Zsolt Harsanyi	Graphology
W. F. Harvey	August Heat
Josephine W. Johnson	John the Six
W. Somerset Maugham	The Luncheon
Edgar Allan Poe	The Tell-Tale Heart
Alexander Woollcott	Full Fathom Five

NOW WRITE YOUR OWN STORY

WELL, this is it! Now that you have read the short shorts, and finished your reading in this book, you can't put off the writing of your own story any longer, if you are ever going to do it. I hope you performed the various writing assignments suggested along the way, and had reasonable success with these story fragments. If so, your courage should be equal to this final major undertaking. In the following paragraphs I offer some suggestions which may prove helpful.

As you know, every story must have action, characters, and setting. Somehow these three elements must be assembled. I suggest that in your planning you start with just one—any one of the three. Find an exciting bit of action in a news item, or select the crazy old man in the next block as a possible character, or decide to write a story with your summer camp as the setting. (I may say confidentially that I think your task will be easier if you start with an exciting bit of action, from a news item or from your own experience.)

If your story is to be a good one, it must give a single impression. (That probably sounds familiar!) So you must next decide on the single impression you are going to try to make on your readers. Perhaps this will be the excitement of the situation in the news item, the cruelty of the crazy old man, or the humor of the life at your camp. Having settled on the single impression, now work out the two remaining elements (characters and setting, or action and setting, or action and characters), keeping this single impression in mind.

Occasionally, instead of starting with action, or character, or setting, an author starts with a theme (such as "Honesty is the best policy," or "All men are created equal"). In this case the theme is the central impression of the story, and the author must work

out all three major elements of the story so that they will illustrate the theme. You can easily see that this method of procedure presents greater difficulty than the usual one of starting with the action or character or setting. Of course, if the action or character or setting suggests to you a theme for your central impression, do not hesitate to give your story a theme. But I should advise against using a theme as the starting-point.

In working out the various elements of your story, do not wander far afield from the phases of life with which you are familiar. You will be able to write a much better story about some incident connected with the junior prom than about the love affairs of some medieval European princess. But do not hesitate to shape your experience to your needs. If, for instance, you wish to write a story about the humorous aspects of life at your summer camp, do not hesitate to inject a humorous incident which may have happened elsewhere. Or, if you remember some event which would have been funny if it had taken a little different turn, don't hesitate to change the incident to meet your needs.

One more thing must be considered before you start writing. This is the matter of plot. You need to determine the extent to which you are going to rely upon suspense to carry your story. In a plot story you must have clearly in mind the two opposing forces in the struggle, and the various incidents by which the conflict proceeds, and the conclusion which will best enforce the central impression you wish to give. You are not obliged to give your story a strong plot; but if your story has a weak plot, you will need great skill to prevent it from seeming to be a weak story to most readers. You will do well not to neglect plot in your story planning.

You have now gathered all the elements necessary for your short story. You know the single impression which you wish the action, the characters, and the setting to give to the reader. You have the plot well outlined in your mind, if you intend to have a plot. The next step is to lay out the plan of the story. Write a running outline, beginning like this:

Description of beach at camp.

Arrival of Jim Sutton, in panic of fear.

Conversation between Jim and "Dad" Owen, in which
Jim insists he saw a tiger.

Etc. . . .

Before you start to write the actual story, check your running outline, keeping your single impression in mind. Jot down by each item any details which will help you to emphasize the single impression as you write. For instance, if you are writing a story to emphasize the humor of life at your summer camp, jot down details of humor after each item in your outline. After "Description of beach at camp" you might write: funny beach costumes, boys tormenting "Fatty" Briggs, Joe Holcomb insisting upon fishing in the swimming area, where no one had ever caught a fish.

And now write! Just let yourself go—and *write*. Don't stop for fine points in grammar, punctuation, and vocabulary. Keep going. Roll the story out.

Watch the ending of your story. Be sure that you end on some point that stresses the central impression. The last sentence of your story is especially important.

When you are through, go back over your manuscript to discover the weak spots. Rewrite these. Check each part to see that it contributes to the central impression. If it does not, revise it or cut it out. Let some persons whose opinions you value read your story. Consider carefully any suggestions they may make and, if you feel that these would be helpful, revise your manuscript to include them. Now let your story rest for a day or two. Then give it a final reading and revision.

Finally, proofread your manuscript for vocabulary, sentence structure, spelling, and punctuation. Do this conscientiously. There is no excuse for a final manuscript full of mechanical errors.

And now sell your story to Hollywood and live happily ever after!

FAMOUS SHORT STORIES OF THE WORLD

SOME stories are so famous that we just naturally assume that everyone has read them. Who is not familiar with Rip Van Winkle, or Sherlock Holmes, or Little Red Riding Hood, or Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde?

The following stories are all famous for one reason or another. Most of the titles listed are those of stories which are individually noteworthy. In a few cases the titles are merely those of typical stories by authors famous for general excellence as short-story writers. The italicized titles are those of whole volumes of short stories.

You may find it of interest to check through this list and see how many of the stories in it you have already read. For future reading, plan to include at least a few of these famous short stories, for they are an important part of the literary heritage of the Western world.

AMERICAN

Washington Irving	.....	The Legend of Sleepy Hollow Rip van Winkle
Nathaniel Hawthorne	.....	The Ambitious Guest The Great Stone Face
Edgar Allan Poe	.....	The Fall of the House of Usher The Gold-Bug The Purloined Letter
Edward Everett Hale	..	..... The Man Without a Country
Frank Richard Stockton	.....	The Lady, or the Tiger?
Mark Twain	.....	The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County
Thomas Bailey Aldrich	.....	Marjorie Daw

Ambrose Bierce	An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge
Bret Harte	The Luck of Roaring Camp
Henry James	The Turn of the Screw
Mary E. Wilkins Freeman	The Revolt of Mother
O. Henry	The Gift of the Magi A Municipal Report
Joel Chandler Harris	<i>Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings</i>
Richard Harding Davis	Gallegher
Ellis Parker Butler	Pigs Is Pigs
Stephen Crane	The Open Boat
Jack London	To Build a Fire
Sherwood Anderson	I'm a Fool
Susan Glaspell	A Jury of Her Peers
Ring Lardner	Alibi Ike
Booth Tarkington	<i>Monsieur Beaucaire</i>
Wilbur Daniel Steele	Footfalls
Stephen Vincent Benét	The Devil and Daniel Webster
Ernest Hemingway	The Killers
John Steinbeck	The Red Pony
MacKinlay Kantor	The Voice of Bugle Ann
William Saroyan	The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze

BRITISH

Old English Folk Tale	Jack the Giant Killer
Sir Thomas Malory	<i>Le Morte d'Arthur</i> (King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table)
Sir Walter Scott	Wandering Willie's Tale
John Brown	Rab and His Friends
Charles Dickens	A Christmas Carol
Wilkie Collins	A Terribly Strange Bed
Thomas Hardy	The Three Strangers
John Ruskin	The King of the Golden River
Robert Louis Stevenson	Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde The Sire de Maletroit's Door
Joseph Conrad	Youth

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle	... . . . .	<i>The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes</i>
W. W. Jacobs	... . . . .	<i>The Monkey's Paw</i>
Rudyard Kipling	... . . . .	<i>The Man Who Would Be King</i> <i>The Elephant's Child</i>
John Galsworthy	... . . . .	<i>The Apple-Tree</i>
"Saki" (H. H. Munro)	... . . . .	<i>The Open Window</i>
Gilbert K. Chesterton	... . . . .	<i>The Innocence of Father Brown</i>
Katherine Mansfield	... . . . .	<i>Life of Ma Parker</i>

RUSSIAN

Alexander Pushkin	... . . . .	<i>The Queen of Spades</i>
Ivan Turgenev	... . . . .	<i>A Lear of the Steppes</i>
Leo N. Tolstoy	... . . . .	<i>Three Arshins of Land</i>
Anton P. Chekov	... . . . .	<i>The Bet</i>
Maxim Gorky	... . . . .	<i>Twenty-Six Men and a Girl</i>
Ivan Bunin	... . . . .	<i>The Gentleman from San Francisco</i>
Leonid M. Andreyev	... . . . .	<i>The Seven That Were Hanged</i>

FRENCH

Charles Perrault	... . . . .	<i>Little Red Riding Hood</i>
Honoré de Balzac	... . . . .	<i>Christ in Flanders</i>
Prosper Mérimée	... . . . .	<i>Mateo Falcone</i>
Théophile Gautier	... . . . .	<i>The Mummy's Foot</i>
Emile Zola	... . . . .	<i>The Attack on the Mill</i>
Alphonse Daudet	... . . . .	<i>The Last Class</i>
François Coppée	... . . . .	<i>The Substitute</i>
Anatole France	... . . . .	<i>Our Lady's Juggler</i>
Guy de Maupassant	... . . . .	<i>The Necklace</i> <i>A Piece of String</i>

MISCELLANEOUS

From <i>Panchatantra</i>	... . . . .	<i>The Raven, the Rat, and the Pigeons (Sanskrit)</i>
From the <i>Bible</i>	... . . . .	<i>The Book of Esther</i> <i>The Book of Jonah</i>

From the <i>Bible</i>	The Book of Ruth Joseph and His Brothers The Prodigal Son
Aesop	<i>Fables</i>
Giovanni Boccaccio	The Patient Griselda (Italian)
From the <i>Arabian Nights</i>	Aladdin and His Wonderful Lamp Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves Sindbad the Sailor
Anonymous	<i>The Adventures of Tyll Eulenspiegel</i> (German)
Baron von Munchausen	<i>The Adventures of Baron Munchausen</i> (German)
The Brothers Grimm	Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (German)
Hans Christian Andersen	The Ugly Duckling (Danish)
Theodor W. Storm	Immensee (German)
Paul Heyse	L'Arrabiata (German)
Björnsterne Björnson	The Father (Norwegian)
August Strindberg	The Stone Man (Swedish)
Hermann Sudermann	A New Year's Eve Confession (German)
Selma Lagerlöf	The Legend of the Christmas Rose (Swedish)
Arthur Schnitzler	The Triple Warning (Austrian)
Luigi Pirandello	The Reserved Coffin (Italian)
Johannes V. Jensen	Lost Forests (Danish)
Grazia Deledda	Two Miracles (Italian)
Sigrid Undset	Simonsen (Norwegian)